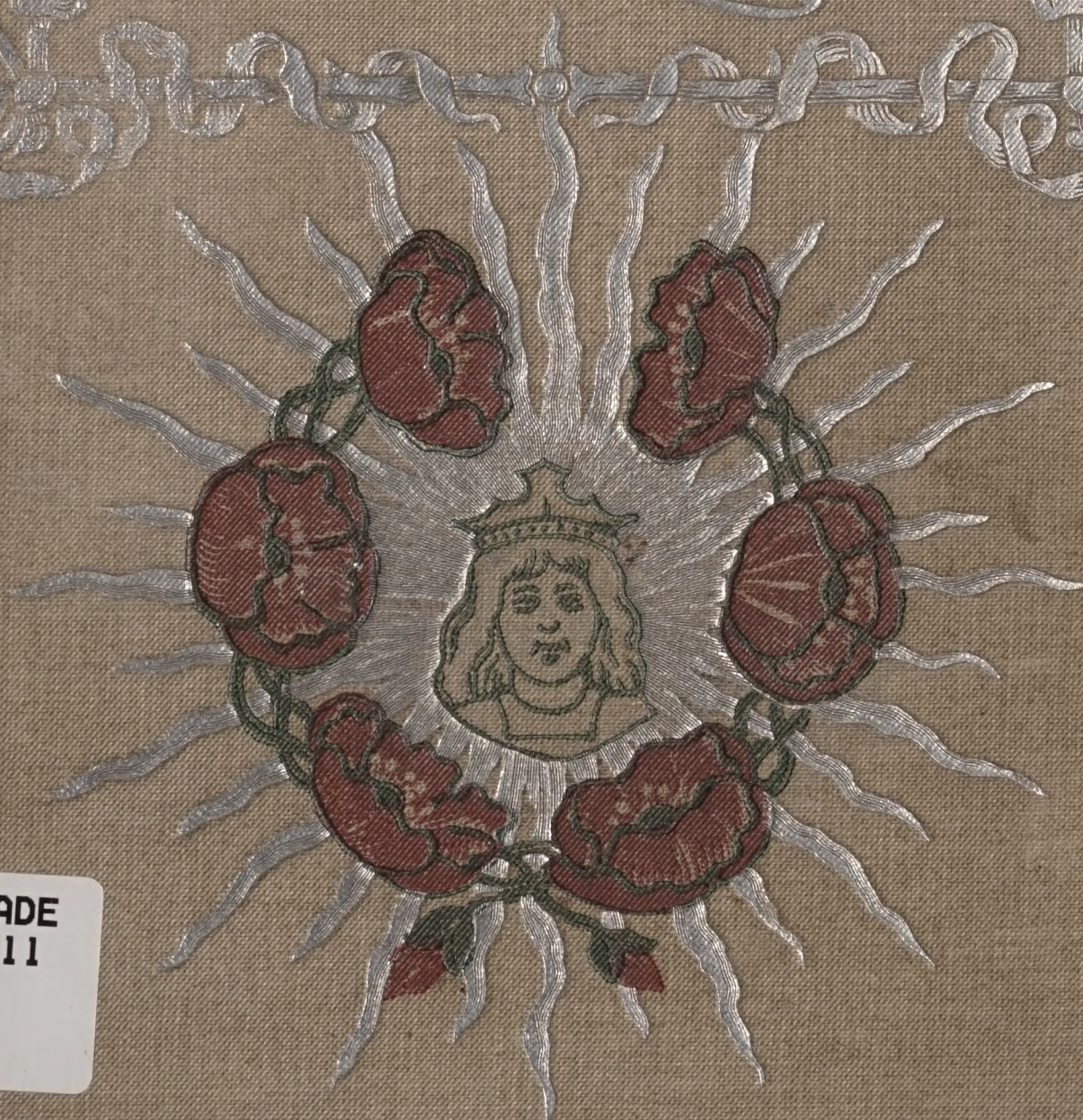


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# IN POPPY LAND

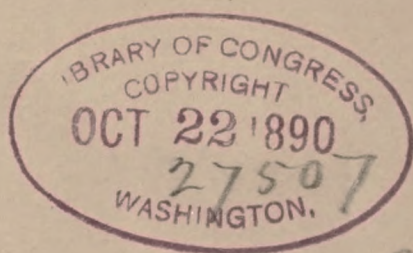
BY

MABEL LOUISE FULLER

ILLUSTRATED BY

ELIZABETH S. TUCKER

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TO  
CORA, MARIAN, AND ETHEL,

*This Book*

IS LOVINGLY DEDICATED.







## FACTS ABOUT FAIRIES.

---

IN the ripple that runs on the river,  
In the bubble that broods on the sea,  
In them each, with a sigh and a shiver,  
A fairy sits, fain to be free.

Then the sunlight beams in the bubble,  
And the ripple turns purple and gold,  
And the wings of the fairies undouble,  
Twice-radiant opals of old.

And they play in the eyes of the baby,  
In the eyes of the flirt and the belle;  
And I know not the havoc, that, maybe,  
They make in our hearts, would we tell.

But the world is so bright with the fairies  
In the sky and the heart and the flowers,  
That the wisest and busiest tarries  
To welcome their pranks and their powers.

CHARLES KNOWLES BOLTON.







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IN POPPY LAND.







## IN POPPY LAND.

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THERE was once upon a time a Prince whose kingdom reached so far that no one rightly knew its limits, and whose followers were so many that only the sands of the sea might outnumber them.

The Prince lived in a beautiful palace made all of precious amber; in his garden bloomed flowers of every hue; in his stables stood horses fleetier than the wind; precious stones, diamonds and rubies and opals, rainbow-tinted, were in his coffers; and at night, as by day, the sweetest singers and the most famed musicians amused, or soothed, or lulled the Prince to rest.

And yet, in spite of all this, the Prince was unhappy, and the saddest thing about it all was, that to save his life the Prince could not tell what it was that troubled him.

In vain had he summoned the wisest men of the kingdom, in vain had the courtiers sought to divert the royal mind, in vain had the most celebrated and learned physicians been consulted; in spite of



all their efforts, the Prince grew daily more dejected and more sad.

At length a decree was issued that whosoever could find out what troubled the Prince should be presented with a robe of ermine, a purse of gold, and the high and honorable post of Chief Crowner, which was a very desirable position indeed, the salary being very large, and the work very slight, consisting as it did only in placing the royal diadem upon the brows of the king on the day of his coronation.

In view of these many inducements, many people offered their services, but all failed; and at length even the Prince himself, who all along had been more hopeful than his followers, despaired of ever finding out the cause of his sorrow.

One day, however, when he was trying in a half-hearted way to interest himself in a game of tennis, a page rushed into the royal presence, and, falling on one knee, said breathlessly that a Wizard of great power and renown was without and waiting to have an audience.

"And he is sure," said the page, "that he can relieve your royal highness."

"Oh, very well," said the Prince wearily, "show him in," and he sat down on a grassy knoll near at hand to await the Wizard's coming.

Hardly had he done so when the page again



appeared, followed this time by a little old man closely wrapped from head to foot in a long red cloak, from beneath the hood of which gleamed two black and piercing eyes. A white beard that shone like silver fell on his breast and reached nearly to the ground, and on the border of his garments were worked many curious signs and figures.

Advancing slowly, the Wizard paused directly before the Prince, and clasping his hands upon his staff, rested there, silent and watchful.

"Greëting, good father," said the Prince kindly, and he motioned him to be seated. "Hast aught, thinkest thou, to avail us in our sorrow?"

Slowly the Wizard bowed.

"Thanks, sire," said he, and in a low, strange voice. "These aged limbs are bent with fatigue and the travel of the way, and rest is grateful. But for thy question. Prithee, let me trace the lines upon thy palm."

The Prince smiled, but held out his hand, and the Wizard, taking it in his own, gazed upon it long and fixedly.

Then he shook his head.

"'Tis passing strange," he muttered, and looking up, he began to question the Prince.

"Sire," said he, "there is something here that baffles even my magic art, yet, perchance, methinks



I may still aid thee. Tell me one thing. Dost sleep well now at nights as heretofore?"

The Prince mournfully replied that slumber had long since become a stranger to his drowsy eyelids.

"Then dost feel often an ache, such as physicians may not cure, in the region of thy heart, and oftener still a strange and potent yearning for something, the nature of which thou dost not know, which longing groweth stronger day by day?"

"Ay, truly, thou art right," said the Prince in surprise, and he sat up, an expression of deep interest upon his face.

"Then," said the Wizard solemnly, "I have found the cause of all thy sorrow." He stood up and gazed impressively down upon the Prince.

"Your royal highness is — in love."

The Prince sprang to his feet and gave a long, low whistle of astonishment. Then he reflected a moment, and then he shook hands with the Wizard.

"It is true," he said delightedly. "I feel it. Something tells me that it is quite true. I am, undoubtedly, in love; but — with whom?"

"Ah," said the Wizard, "that is the point; with whom?"

The Prince looked gloomy again, and sat down once more.



“One of the court ladies?” suggested the Wizard.

“Possibly,” said the Prince, brightening, and then he called loudly for his retainers, and in a moment the court was filled with men-at-arms, lackeys, and pages, all running to fulfil the royal behest.

“Go,” said the Prince to those there assembled, “and let it be known far and near that the cause of our dejection is at length discovered.”

He turned majestically towards the Wizard.

“This learned enchanter has found out the truth. Know, then, that love is at the root of this matter. We have fallen in love, for so the Wizard hath it. Gather together the ladies of the court, and all beautiful maidens, of whatever station. Bid them assemble in the palace hall. To-morrow, at ten, we choose our royal bride.”

At this there was great cheering and a great commotion, and when the Prince was again alone with the Wizard, he turned to him and said, —

“Great, good father, shall be thy reward; but first tell us, — how are we to know who, among so many, is the object of our search?”

“That is easily determined,” said the Wizard, “for your royal highness cannot possibly mistake the feeling that will agitate you on beholding her.



Wait only until the morrow, and all shall yet be well."

Saying which he made a profound bow, and withdrew from the royal presence; while the Prince himself, with head bent upon his breast and eyes fixed upon the ground, in deep thought, entered the palace portals — alone.

When the news of this summons was carried by swift-footed couriers through the Prince's dominions, from the east to the west, and from the north to the south, the wildest excitement prevailed; and the dressmakers and seamstresses had all at once so many orders for costumes of rare beauty and elegant design, that they had to sit up all night to finish them; while the jewellers and hairdressers were equally in demand; and, as for the manufacturers of the Elixir of Beauty, they were enabled to sell out their entire stock, and grew all at once so rich that many of them retired, and some bought titles, and were made dukes and earls immediately.

Within the palace itself all was likewise hurry and confusion. The immense audience-hall was draped with hangings of silver tissue; alabaster lamps were hung from golden chains from the roof; ninety washwomen came and scrubbed, and then sand-papered, the marble floor; all the brown holland covers were taken off the furniture; each



page had a new livery of peach-blossom velvet slashed with wine-color and pinked out with seed pearls ; five new footmen were engaged for the occasion ; seventy polishers came for the express purpose of polishing the golden dragons that supported the throne ; on the throne itself reposed a cushion worked in tints that outrivalled the rainbow in beauty ; above, shone a canopy of azure thickly studded with diamond stars. When the Prince entered to behold the grand result, it was no wonder that a smile of contentment overspread his features ; but when he saw the vast multitude of fair and lovely ladies of every rank and station, that began to pour into the palace gate, his face again grew troubled, for it seemed to him a very difficult thing to make any choice among so many.

But then he reflected upon what the Wizard had told him as to the guide which his own feelings would furnish in the matter, and so it was with something of calmness, after all, that on the stroke of ten, he entered the audience-room and beheld before him the vast assembly.

Like a bed of flowers nodding in the wind they appeared, with their gay gowns of every hue, and their faces shining with mingled expectancy and invitation.

Slowly the Prince passed down the long line, looking at each one closely. Brown eyes and



blue, golden locks and tresses of midnight; this one tall and beautiful as a young poplar, that one tiny and sweet as a May-blossom.

The Prince paused at the end of the long row, bewildered. All were graceful, all lovely, all charming; but not one, not one, had caused the Prince any particular feeling whatsoever.

In vain did he scan each maiden's face. That indefinite but powerful yearning still remained, and among all this beauty found yet no response.

Sadly, therefore, he resumed his seat upon the throne.

"Ladies," said he, "I thank you — but I fear my unhappy fate is sealed. I admire, I worship, I like you all; but, alas, I do not love you. That, however, I cannot but feel is my misfortune —" he made a low and courtly bow, and all the ladies courtesied in reply.

"But," added the Prince, "let this not, I pray you, cast a gloom upon the festivities which are to grace the occasion. In an adjoining room, sherbets and ices, and confections of all sorts, are placed at your disposal — my lords here will see that you go not unattended. To-night a grand ball will make memorable the meeting which, believe me, shall ever be enshrined as one of the happiest of my life." And laying his hand upon his heart, the Prince again bowed low in farewell.



Then the heralds blew a loud blast upon their trumpets, the door swung open, sweet music filled the air, and the feast began.

But the Prince withdrew to pass the day in sad and solitary meditation after his disappointment, and it was not until evening that he again sought the Wizard, where, flinging himself wearily down on a couch near at hand, he related the failure of the experiment.

The Wizard listened attentively, and when the Prince had finished, he thought deeply, and in silence, for some time. Then he said, —

“There is but one thing left now to do. I have consulted my magic books, and they tell me that she whom thou lovest is to appear to thee first in slumber. Drink, therefore, of this cup made from the leaves of the poppy. Sleep well, Prince, I watch and wait beside thee. To-night I view the stars in their course, and to-morrow will bring thee, if I much mistake not, good news and comfort.”

The Prince thanked him, and, touching his lips to the proffered cup, sank immediately into a profound sleep.

All night the Wizard watched beside him, and when the first rays of the morning sun fell, a golden flood, upon the amber turrets of the palace, the Prince awoke. And when he opened his eyes there



was a new light in their depths, and when he spoke, an underlying gladness in his voice.

“I have seen her,” said he to the Wizard. “She was crowned with poppies, and her face was beautiful, more than that of the daughters of men. I love her. Tell me how I may find her.”

“She dwells,” said the Wizard, “far, far away, and her kingdom is in Poppy Land. Albeit thou art destined to win her, set out at once. Mount thy fleetest steed, and ride until thou comest to the magic fountain which lieth to the west. There dismount. Hide behind the branches of the trees that grow near by. At evening a white winged horse will alight there to quench his thirst. Come gently forward. Seize him by the mane; mount, and away! His home is in Poppy Land, and safe will he bear thee thither. Of what further may befall thee is not revealed. Only this, keep thy heart pure, thy face turned towards the setting sun; and now all good fortune attend thy journeying.”

Filled with gratitude, the Prince thanked the Wizard for his counsel, and begged him to remain and govern the kingdom during his absence. This the Wizard consented to do; and hardly had he promised his assistance, when the Prince, bidding him a hasty farewell, prepared to set forth on his travels. Shortly, therefore, the great draw-



bridge was lowered, and over it in the early morning rode the Prince, his charger bedecked with jewels, the white plume in his cap and his short purple cloak fluttering in the wind, and a bunch of fiery poppies glowing on his breast.

Long he rode and steadily, till the walls of the city shone faintly in the distance and then melted out of sight, on through the green wood, on 'mid the lengthening shadows, on through daisy fields and emerald meadows, on by cottages, over the dusty road, fording babbling brooks, and so, till many a weary league was traversed and many a landmark passed.

At length, glimmering indistinctly before him, the Prince perceived the magic fountain, and just at nightfall reached it.

Hastily dismounting, he hid, as the Wizard had directed, behind the tree branches, and soon a great wind stirred them, and from his covert the Prince heard the sound of wings, and, looking forth, beheld the most beautiful horse that he had ever seen.

Down as gently as a snowflake he came, and alighting, stood still for a moment, arching his neck, pawing the ground with his gold-shod hoofs, and seeming to listen suspiciously; but finding all quiet he stooped to drink, and on the instant, the Prince, springing forward, grasped the silken mane,



and the next moment was safe astride the charger's back. The beautiful horse reared and plunged and quivered in every limb, but the Prince sat firm, and, finding the struggle useless, the winged steed at length mounted swiftly, and the Prince found himself in mid-air, the setting sun before him and the gate of Poppy Land opening in the distance and shining in the golden west.

Straight as an arrow shot from its bow flew the white horse, and the Prince's pulse throbbed and his heart beat loudly, the wind smote his face and blew through his nut-brown locks; and below him like a star shone the magic fountain, and dimly glimmered the green earth.

On and on, till suddenly the clouds of violet and crimson shut them in, then melted away, and the white horse alighted and stood motionless. And this was Poppy Land.

For a space the Prince gazed at the lovely scene before him, but the sight of the city walls, glittering in the sunshine, reminded him of his quest, and urging his now docile steed, it was not long before he entered the principal gate.

When the people saw the Prince coming upon the white horse, there was immediately the greatest excitement, for never before had the winged steed owned, to their knowledge, a rider, and they crowded and pressed close about him, all talking



at once, and all asking questions. But the Prince, because of his station, was used to creating a commotion, so he only bowed and smiled at the populace, and when there came a lull for a moment amid the confusion, he inquired of one of the peasants nearest him the name of the principal inn.

This being obtained, the Prince at once directed his way thither, still escorted by the multitude, and on reaching the place dismounted, himself placed his steed in the stable, and then, pushing past the wondering landlord, who stood open-mouthed at the door of the inn, the Prince entered, leaving the curious throng without.

Now the noise of the tumult had reached even unto the palace, and it was not long before a page in scarlet came hurriedly running to demand the reason of the disturbance. And when he heard of the stranger who had come riding on the winged horse, he too was very much astonished, and, after having been helped up on top of an empty barrel, so that he was able to catch through the window a glimpse of the new-comer quietly eating a hearty meal, the page ran back to the palace as fast as his short legs could carry him, to relate all that he had seen and heard.

Rushing, therefore, breathlessly into the Princess's apartment, he found her sitting there on a low stool, obediently sewing a seam, with all her



maiden aunts, nine in number, who acted as chaperones, around her.

"It is a young man who has come," began the page, and the Princess ceased working immediately and looked up, but the Eldest Maiden Aunt made a sign for him to stop.

"Amabella," said she, "take your sewing, and go into the next room. We will discuss this event in your absence."

She turned to the other Maiden Aunts. "With the young, one cannot be too careful." There was an approving murmur at this sentiment, and the Princess only, looked rebellious.

"How I hate this old patchwork!" she said, but she rose wearily, nevertheless, and obeyed with lagging footsteps. But they had not told her to shut the door, so it was not altogether her fault perhaps, if some of the page's conversation reached her.

She forgot her sewing and sat with her dimpled chin in her hand, a little frown on her white forehead, and her brown eyes wide open with mingled meditation and interest.

So the stranger was very handsome, and he had come into Poppy Land riding upon the beautiful winged horse. Surely, that was very remarkable. Should she ever see him, she wondered; and if so, what would he be like? There was a picture somewhere in an old, old story-book of hers, she



remembered, of a prince and a princess, and the prince was kissing the princess's hand.

The Princess looked at her own small hand reflectively.

She must find that old story-book, she thought.

She had plenty of other books, geometries and histories and such things, but these would not do. She would look for that picture that very day, and —

“Amabella,” called out one of her Maiden Aunts, and when she returned they all reproved her severely for wasting her time.

“Only two inches of patchwork done, your royal highness!” said they. “Pray, of what can you have been thinking?”

But the Princess only smiled a little to herself, and even when they told her that she must copy, in addition to her usual lesson, two pages of Latin grammar, she still smiled.

Meanwhile, the Prince, having eaten his lunch at the inn, began to make inquiries, and he found out, before long, several important things.

First, that the Princess was very beautiful, that she had just completed her seventeenth year, that she was surrounded and guarded, day and night, by nine maiden ladies, each one a dragon of decorum and watchfulness.

There was no doubt about it, her royal highness



was being brought up in the most approved method, and a little later she was to marry the Giant whose kingdom lay next to Poppy Land. The people all felt sorry for her, for they loved the little Princess with her tangled mass of golden hair, and her brown eyes that were so ready to laugh with their merry-making or weep for their sorrows.

The Giant was a great, burly monster, with a loud voice, a long red beard, and a fierce and cruel expression.

He had only visited the kingdom once, and that was a long time ago, but the peasants still remembered him and trembled at his name; and, as for the little Princess, she had hidden away in a corner, and not all the nine maiden aunts together had been able to induce her to come out. But the Giant had only laughed, and had sworn that when she was a little older he would come and make her his bride. And then he had thundered away on his great black horse, Nightmare, and that was the last they had seen of him.

When the Prince heard all these things, he thought and thought for a long time, and then he inquired the way to the nearest blacksmith's shop, and there he had forged for him three arrows, one of iron, one of silver, and one of fine gold. Then the Prince went to the house of the Unex-



celled Poet, and asked him to make three love verses, each one to be more tender than the other.

This being done, he next proceeded to the shop of the Chief Musician, where he selected a guitar of great beauty of workmanship and melody of tone, and having done so, the Prince returned to the inn.

The next day, when the Princess and her duennas were taking their customary stroll in the palace garden, the Prince concealed himself behind the shrubbery, and just as the Eldest Maiden Aunt passed his hiding-place, he took the iron arrow and transfixing with it the first love verse, he shot with such good aim, that it fell directly at her feet.

The Eldest Maiden Aunt gave a little scream of surprise and alarm, and all the other duennas followed her example.

But when, curiosity overpowering her fear, she cautiously picked up the paper and glanced at the first few lines, she suddenly blushed and thrust the verses hastily into her pocket.

“Let us see,” said all the other Maiden Ladies.

“Let me see,” said the Princess.

But the Eldest Maiden Aunt shook her head decidedly, and soon making an excuse, she retired to an arbor near at hand, where, being quite alone,



she pulled the paper out of her pocket, and putting on her eyeglasses, read it all through.

“How lovely,” said she to herself, —

‘Thine eyes so blue  
Methinks are true.’

“Ah, and here, —

‘The rays they dart  
Have pierced my heart.’

“And then at the very end, —

‘If you’ll be mine,  
I’ll not repine.’”

She sat for a long time thinking. “What romantic sentiment and what elegant language,” said she to herself. “It must be the stranger youth who has formed for me this sudden and deep attachment. It will not do to give him too much encouragement — and yet” —

But when the Princess returned, with the rest of the duennas, she found the Eldest Maiden Aunt still resting in the arbor.

The next day they again all walked together in the garden, only this time the Eldest Maiden Aunt had on a new cap with a pale blue bow, and her best plum-colored silk, and her new lace mitts; and sure enough, before they had gone very far, a silver arrow fell into the garden-walk at her feet,



and this time all the duennas were so anxious to read the paper; and pleaded so hard to be allowed to do so, that the Eldest Maiden Aunt at length blushing consented, only she sent the Princess away first to gather some poppies that grew at a distance.

Now the Princess was very glad to do this, so she tripped merrily along through the tall field grass, but when she reached the spot she stood very still and forgot all about the flowers which she had come to find; for there, standing before her, just as was shown in her picture-book, was the stranger youth. For a moment the Princess looked at him with wide-open eyes, but finally she found her tongue.

“Are you a Prince?” she asked timidly.

“Yes,” answered the stranger.

“And why have you come to Poppy Land?” asked the Princess.

“Because I love you,” said the stranger.

“Oh!” said the Princess, and then she said nothing.

Then the Prince began to talk very rapidly, and he told her all about himself, his kingdom, his dream, his journeying; and the Princess listened, and she became so much interested that the Eldest Maiden Aunt had called her several times before she heard her and answered.



“Why, where are your poppies?” all the dunnas cried in chorus, when she appeared before them quite empty-handed.

But the Princess was silent and hung her head.

But the next day something happened.

The Giant arrived unexpectedly, in the early morning, on his great, black winged steed, and everything in the palace was at once all confusion and excitement.

He had come, he said, to marry the Princess. He was in a great hurry, and he wanted the wedding then and there; and when all the Maiden Aunts held up their hands in horror and said, impossible, the Princess must have at least some weeks in which to prepare her trousseau, the Giant roared out “Fiddlesticks!” in his great loud voice, and would only consent to wait a day and a night for his bride.

“And that is a day and a night too long,” said he, “but tell her to be ready early to-morrow morning, for I have affairs of importance on hand.” And then he retired muttering to his apartments, and left the little Princess weeping and trembling at the summons.

But when evening came and they walked again in the garden, the golden arrow fell, and the Princess saw the Prince as before, and told him all that had befallen her.



“Very well,” said the Prince, “then I will tell you what we must do. To-night I shall come with my guitar in the garden and play softly beneath your window. When you hear me, open the casement, and let fall this white poppy bud. Then I will throw you a silken ball of cord which you must catch. Unwind it. It is a rope ladder; slender, but very strong. Fasten it to your window and then descend. I will be at the garden gate on my white winged steed. Together we will fly, and the morning, I trust, will find us far on our way with the border of Poppy Land not many leagues distant.”

“That will I do,” said the Princess, and the Prince knelt and kissed her hand, and she returned, thoughtful and silent, to the palace.

That night the moon rose white and clear, and from beneath the Princess’s window there floated upward a strange, soft melody: —

“Open thy casement, my love, my sweet,  
For the night is fair, and the night is long;  
And alone I wait, near the garden gate,  
And list to the nightingale’s song.

Soft and sweet, it cometh to me,  
Singing of love that is e’er the same;  
While the lilies tall, by the garden wall,  
Sway to and fro, with the glad refrain.



We are alone 'neath the silver moon ;  
Come, sweetheart, come ! and, hand in hand,  
E'er break of day, we'll out and away,  
While far behind us lies Poppy Land."

When the Princess heard these words, she at once opened the lattice and let fall the white blossom, and the Prince stooped and picked it up, and kissing it placed it in his breast. Then he tossed up the silken ball, which the Princess cleverly caught, and the next moment he held her in his arms.

But at that instant there was a faint shriek, and the face of the Eldest Maiden Aunt appeared at a window above, and then was hastily withdrawn.

"She thought you were serenading her," whispered the Princess, and she clung tremblingly to the Prince.

"Goodness !" said he in alarm, "come, let us go," and together they ran down the garden walk, and the Prince, hurriedly mounting the white winged steed, swung the Princess lightly up behind him, — and none too soon, for lights were beginning to gleam here and there throughout the palace, the courtiers and pages were running to and fro, and the terrible voice of the Giant was heard above all the clamor, demanding an explanation of the excitement.

"Faster," whispered the Princess to the white



horse, and, as if he understood, the noble steed fled like the wind.

On in the pale moonlight through the sleeping city, out over the moors, away and away.

But now, alas! was heard behind them the trampling of iron hoofs, and Amabella, looking back, saw in the distance the massive form of the Giant, on his black winged steed Nightmare.

The Princess trembled with terror, but she patted the smooth coat of the white horse with her little hand, and murmured gently encouraging and loving words:—

“Swiftly, good steed, swiftly! See, there before us lies the plain, and beyond that the forest, and then safety for us and rest for thee!” But though the winged creature seemed to hear and to understand, the Giant gained still upon them.

Now he was ten paces away. Now still nearer, and now the fiery breath from the nostrils of the black horse smote them.

Hastily unclasping her diamond girdle, the Princess threw it behind her, and the Giant, glancing at the jewels for a moment, paused, hesitated, and then reined in the charger sharply.

“I can overtake them yet, easily,” he muttered to himself, “and jewels like these are not to be left in the dust for any idle passer-by.”

It was only a moment, and flinging the girdle



before him on the saddle, he mounted again in pursuit, but the white horse was straining every nerve, and the distance had widened greatly.

However, on and on went the Prince and the Princess, and on and on went the Giant, and now Nightmare again was close behind. But before them stretched a tall forest of poppies, and through these the white horse plunged swiftly.

“Help us, dear flowers,” begged the Princess, and the poppies nodded in answer and opened before them to let them pass, but when the Giant came up they had closed again once more, and the black horse had to flounder through them as best it might.

And now the gate of Poppy Land gleamed golden in the distance, and beyond it the Giant might not go; but the white winged steed had begun to falter, and the strain was beginning to tell. A black cloud shut out the blue sky, the wind rose and shrieked dismally, and the Giant was again close behind. Closer and closer, and just before them the gate and freedom;—closer, and the Giant leaned forward and caught the Princess’s gown in his fingers, but the frail fabric tore in his grasp, and that moment the sun, coming out from behind the cloud, shone full on the Princess’s golden hair.

The sight dazzled the Giant for a moment; he



put up his hand to shield his eyes, and the next, the gate of Poppy Land swung back on its hinges, and the white horse and its burden were lost to sight.

That night the Wizard had a dream, in which he saw the Prince returning, and when he awoke he ordered a grand feast to be prepared, and at the head of a large multitude he set forth to meet him. Nor was he wrong, for soon on the highway he beheld the Prince, and beside him a maiden, crowned with poppies and more beautiful than the sun, while close behind them followed the winged steed.

Immediately the people uttered a great shout of welcome, and surrounded the Prince and Princess, and thus they proceeded homeward in triumph; and when they reached there first the white horse was lodged in an ivory stall, to eat fresh clover and gilded oats, and then the Prince and Princess went to the palace, where the Prince made a little speech, in which he thanked his subjects for their loyalty and presented to them their Queen, and when he finished, the shouts and cries of joy were redoubled, for the beautiful Princess had won all hearts.

Then the Wizard showed the royal pair the books of state, and when the Prince saw how well and wisely the kingdom had been governed in his



absence, he was filled with amazement and gratitude, and begged the Wizard to remain in the palace as Prime Minister, and continue to conduct the affairs of the kingdom; but the Wizard shook his head, and, though the Prince and Princess both entreated him to remain, he said that he must depart forthwith on his travels.

At length said the Prince, —

“What wilt thou, then, take from us as a token of our undying thankfulness and friendship? Ask what thou wilt, and it is thine!”

“Then,” said the Wizard, bowing low, “I would beseech her highness to grant me but the wreath of poppies which she wears upon her hair, that when I reach the haunts of men I may carry them with me, that their touch may soothe all pain, and banish all sorrow, and bring to little children sweet dreams of Poppy Land.”



PRINCE MERRYHEART AND THE  
CRYSTAL BALL.















## PRINCE MERRYHEART AND THE CRYSTAL BALL.

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ONCE upon a time, in a country far away, there lived a little Prince, who was always so jolly and happy, so filled with joy and good spirits, that he came to be called, by all who knew him, Prince Merryheart, and his real name, if he ever had one, was forgotten.

Some people said this was because of his natural gayety; but others, that it was because of a crystal ball that a fairy had given him at birth, and that he always wore around his neck and hanging from a golden chain upon his breast.

Now the King of this land, who was also Merryheart's father, was a great and skilful hunter, and as he cared for nothing but killing hyptogriffs and shooting penticans, the little Prince was left very much to himself, especially as the Queen, his mother, was oftener in the parlor drinking tea with the duchesses and ladies of her court, or driving in her mother-of-pearl chariot returning



calls, or trying on her beautiful pearl and diamond trimmed dresses, than talking with Merryheart or visiting his workshop, or listening in the evening to his stories about the day, and holding him in her lap as your mother holds you.

Nevertheless, the little Prince was but seldom lonely. In the first place, he had for his constant friend and companion his own dwarf, Happygolucky, who showed him the most beautiful games and taught him the loveliest tricks, such as the very easiest way of standing on his head and other things equally necessary and entertaining; and in the second place there was the whole great, wonderful forest for a playground, where every tree was a brother, and every fawn or squirrel or bird a playmate.

Indeed, little Merryheart often found the day too short to do all the things he had planned, although he jumped with the best will in the world into his small royal coat and knickerbockers and was out almost before the sun had risen, and always before the sleepy old warden at the castle gate was wide enough awake to know whether the small form that danced lightly by him was in fact a boy or a sunbeam.

Sometimes perhaps the King would remember his son and heir, and would tell the Court Tutor, in a loud voice, to see that Merryheart had learned



the rule of three, and the multiplication table, and had studied the maps and knew the English grammar by heart before night, but the Tutor was always too busy to do more than pass the order to some one else, and by evening the King, too, had forgotten all about the matter ; so Merryheart grew up in ignorance of many of the things now taught in the schools. However, in those days reading and writing were not much thought of, especially for princes, and Merryheart knew already how to fence, and ride, and box, how to doff his cap and kneel to a lady, and this was quite all that was expected.

Now, the castle, Merryheart's home, was very old, and very large, and very gloomy. Hardly any one had been all over it, nor had even the little Prince, who had lived there all his life. There were many strange and dark corridors, leading no one knew where, and stairs leading no one knew whither, and hidden corners and secret chambers, and one of these secret chambers was always kept locked until the day that the heir of the throne became of age, when he was ushered in alone, for what purpose it was not revealed, and came out after a time looking always either very joyful or very sad.

Little Merryheart had heard of this room, and so had the dwarf, Happygolucky, and it was not



very long before they had come to the conclusion to find out, by some means or other, what this hidden chamber contained. There was first, however, the key to be found, and that was kept always in the strong room of the palace, along with the King's best crown and sceptre. Happygolucky, however, was not dismayed; he had always the deepest conviction that something nice was forever on the point of turning up, and, trusting to the fortune that seldom failed them, Prince Merryheart and Happygolucky, hand in hand, and only a little afraid, went down the long corridor leading to the secret chamber.

It was broad daylight elsewhere, but here only the bravest of sunbeams tried to struggle through the cobwebbed and dust-laden window-panes. Outside, the birds were singing, the fountains playing, and the huntsmen calling their dogs and horses; inside, nothing broke the profound stillness save the patter of the four little feet on the oaken floor of the hall.

On went Merryheart and on went Happygolucky, and soon they came to the chamber portal, and here was the wonderful part of the matter—the door was ajar and swinging on its heavy hinges, just enough for Merryheart to catch a glimpse of the shadowy depth beyond. It must have been that the last person who had entered



the room had either been so frightened or so hurried, from some cause or other, that the usual turning of the key in the lock had been quite forgotten and afterward never remembered. However, Merryheart did not stop long to wonder about this, but put his brave little hand on the hilt of his tiny sword, and, with a smile of farewell to the dwarf, who remained outside, and with as bold an air as he could manage, walked straight into the dark and secret chamber.

At first he saw nothing, but after a moment a faint glimmer of light seemed to come from the farther end of the room; which, after a little, growing stronger and brighter, showed to Merryheart what seemed to be a long velvet curtain worked in curious figures and hanging near the ceiling from a rod of gold. This was not so very terrible, and, taking courage, the little Prince advanced, and, holding tight one corner between his fingers, drew the velvet to one side. He then saw that it had served to cover a large mirror, such as he had noticed many times before in other parts of the palace. But no, not quite the same as those that he had seen, for now out of its misty depth a something, a picture, was growing. Merryheart's eyes opened wide with surprise, for there, right in front of him, so near that he could almost touch her with his hand, he saw in the mirror the most



beautiful little girl in the world, sitting on a footstool, with a small golden crown on her curls, eating a jam tart and crying as if her heart would break. Now, the little Prince could never bear to see any one in trouble, and so he grasped his sword more tightly, and called to her in a loud voice: "Little girl, dear little girl, why do you weep? Who is troubling you? Tell me, that I may stop him." But the little girl did not seem to hear him—she never even looked up; and then, as Prince Merryheart gazed and gazed, the picture grew fainter, the light dimmer, and in a moment he found himself in the darkness and alone. The only difference was that Merryheart felt very queer indeed, and as if he loved this strange little girl with all his strength; and as if, also, he would never be content until he found her, and had dried her tears, and brought a smile to her pretty, rosy lips.

Going thoughtfully out, he found Happygolucky, who had been playing jackstones and waiting patiently for his return.

Now, the real reason of what Merryheart had seen was this, although he did not know it until some time afterward. The mirror was a magic mirror, and had been in the family for many hundreds and hundreds of years. Looking in it for the first time, the Prince of the house always saw the



lady of his love, and saw her doing also that which she was oftenest likely to do. Merryheart had seen the Princess Dolorosa, for that was the little girl's name, and he had found her weeping and eating a jam tart at the same time, which meant that, however pleasant the thing that the Princess might be doing, she never took any delight or happiness in it, but wept and sobbed in spite of all one could do, and that from morning till night.

Of course you will see at once that the Princess was under a spell, and you must try to fancy how very bad the spell must have been, and how uncommonly strong, when she was able to feel sad and cry, and eat a jam tart at one and the same time.

It all happened in this wise. At the christening of the little Princess, all the fairies were invited, as is the custom in well-regulated courts, and each in return brought gifts. Among them, however, was the fairy Crosspatch, who had always tried, all her life long, to be as disagreeable as possible; and who, having lived already several thousand years, had had, as you may imagine, plenty of practice. She began on this occasion, by coming very late; so that, before her arrival, the soup was cold, the guests both uneasy and hungry, and the Queen ready to cry for nervous vexation. However, she hobbled in as if nothing had happened, and went straight to the throne, every one



falling back as she came nearer, for even the fairies present were afraid of her, knowing, as they did, her wickedness and her power. Indeed, their majesties looked as if they, too, would have liked to run away ; but, as that could not be, they tried instead to appear as pleased and smiling as possible.

“ Dear, dear, how very old you are growing,” said Crosspatch to the King, in her high, cracked voice, and then she went on to tell him of a revolt in a distant part of his dominions, and how the crops had failed in another portion.

“ And why will you insist on wearing purple,” she said, turning to the Queen, “ when it is so unbecoming, and makes you look positively yellow ? ” and so on from one to another, until every one there at the court felt as uncomfortable as possible ; after achieving which, Crosspatch sat down at the table and made a hearty meal of ice cream, chicken salad, lobster patties, chocolate éclaires, frozen pudding, escalloped oysters and meringues. Meanwhile, the good fairies present, who felt very sorry for the poor King and Queen, tried to make things pleasanter by noticing the baby, who smiled and danced and crowed and kicked, and behaved like the very best little girl in all the world. As a matter of fact, the fairies were so enchanted that they gave little Dolorosa their very best gifts, — one bestowing beauty ; another, health ; another, a long



life; and when at length one of them ended by endowing the baby with hair that would never, under any circumstances, come out of curl, it did seem that Dolorosa, of all the Princesses in the world, was to be the most happy and fortunate.

Crosspatch, during all this time, had been so busy eating as to forget very nearly all about little Dolorosa; but, just as she was finishing the last meringue, she heard the baby laugh, and to hear any one laugh, were it only a baby, always put Crosspatch in a passion. So she hobbled over to the group of fairies and stooped over the cradle. Touching the baby's breast with one bony finger, she said, in a low tone: "Be thou heavy of heart." Immediately the little Princess's face changed; the tiny mouth drew down at the corners, the lips quivered, tears stood in the pretty blue eyes, and Dolorosa began to cry.

That was the beginning of the working of the charm, and that was why Merryheart came to see the Princess as he did.

You can fancy, perhaps, the grief of the poor King and Queen, the wicked joy of Crosspatch, and the sorrow of the other fairies. For a time so stricken with despair were they, that nothing was done; but after a while the mother-heart of the good Queen took courage, and at her command a notice was posted on the palace gates with the



promise of a large reward to any one or anybody who could remove the spell or find some way out of the dilemma. In the beginning a large crowd of people of every class and condition besieged the audience-room, with all sorts of plans and cures for the trouble, from the Head Nurse, who prescribed soothing-syrup as likely to meet the case, to the bootblack on the corner, who offered to turn somersaults or catch and swallow pennies for the royal baby's amusement.

But, unfortunately, all these theories turned out in practice dismally alike, especially in one thing, and that was their utter inability to please or soothe the Princess for even a single moment.

After a time people stopped coming, and at last even the mother of little Dolorosa herself gave up all hope. When things are at the worst, however, light is very often at hand, and it came in this case from the visit of a Travelling Wizard.

This Travelling Wizard was a very wise man indeed, and the strange spell worked by Crosspatch interested him very much. He thought about it for two weeks without stopping, and finally it occurred to him to look in his Book of Magic and see if there he might not find something to help the little Princess. But works on magic are almost always very badly written, and sometimes whole sentences of this one were left out, so it took some



time for him to find out the right thing ; but at last, with the book under his arm and his best gold-bowed spectacles on his nose, the Travelling Wizard came to the palace gate and asked boldly for the King and Queen.

Now, it was just the hour of the King's nap, so he only turned over once and punched the royal pillow, and did not even answer the footman who came with the Wizard's card ; but when the Queen heard of this new visitor her face brightened, and she ordered him to be admitted immediately. So up came the Wizard into the royal presence, and, after bowing very low, and coughing several times, and wiping his forehead with his red silk handkerchief, he unclasped the magic volume and told the Queen that all the Princess needed for a complete cure for sadness was to wear, if only for a few hours, the crystal ball.

"And what is the crystal ball ? and where may it be found ?" cried the Queen and all the maids of honor.

"The crystal ball, may it please your majesty, and you, fair ladies of this court," answered the Wizard, "is made of liquid sunshine mingled with determined cheerfulness, but where it may be found — this book — ahem — er — unfortunately does not say.

"However," he added, as the Queen's face fell,



“that does not so much matter, as for a small sum I am quite ready to prophesy that before her twentieth year the Princess Dolorosa shall be delivered from the spell, shall marry happily, and wear the crystal ball; that is, if you are careful not to let circumstances interfere in the mean time.”

At this the Queen clapped her hands for joy, and, presenting the Travelling Wizard with a chain of diamonds and a purse of gold, bade him farewell and good speed on his journey.

We must now, however, return to the little Merryheart, who, ever since we left him, has been growing happier and stronger and more manly every hour, and falling deeper and deeper in love with the little girl of the jam tart and the mirror.

At last, when he reached the age of seventeen, he could stand being away from her no longer, and taking Happygolucky he went to the King and begged permission to set forth on his travels. Now, the King had just heard of a new kind of hyptogriff that had lately infested the mountains near the palace, and he was too busy planning a hunting expedition against them to do more than nod his agreement to Merryheart's request, without any very clear idea of what the request might be; and when the young Prince went in turn to say good-bye to his mother, he found her very much excited over some new ball dresses, so he did not trouble



her longer than was needful, but, receiving her hasty kiss, bade her farewell, and started forth on his journeying.

But after he had gone, a darkness seemed to fall on the palace. The Queen found herself waiting and watching for the sound of Merryheart's feet in the hall, and the bright, happy voice that used to float in through the castle windows. The King found hunting grow rather tiresome, after all, and spent many long hours before the fire, looking into the glowing embers and thinking of his far-away son. - So lonely did he become, that had he known where Merryheart was, he would have sent after him with all haste, and besought or commanded his return, but he had not thought even to ask; so he had to content himself with stationing a sentinel on the highest tower of the palace, with orders to watch for the Prince's return, and with a promise of a purse of gold when he should bring the good tidings.

Meanwhile, Merryheart and Happygolucky had journeyed many a dusty mile on the King's high-road, and through many a dreary forest, where it would have been too dark and gloomy for them to find their way had it not been for Merryheart's crystal ball, that rested right on his breast, glowing like a sphere of fire, and casting a light as from a torch all round and about them.



Presently, however, they saw in the distance, the spires and roofs of a noble city, and before evening they reached the gates, at which Happygolucky boldly knocked. These swinging wide open at the touch, they entered, and found themselves on a wide avenue shaded by great trees, and seemingly quite deserted. Going farther, however, they heard a noise such as is made by a large crowd talking together, and before long they found themselves in the midst of a vast throng of people, who seemed greatly excited. Happygolucky mingled among them, and, coming back to the Prince, told him that the people were all feeling very badly because of the loss of their beautiful Princess.

At this Merryheart clapped his hand to his sword and said, "Who is this Princess? why is she lost? who has carried her away? and what shall we do about it?"

"The Princess," said Happygolucky, "is the only daughter of the reigning King and Queen of this country. Her name is Dolorosa, because from birth she has been always unhappy. Being a princess, she of course weeps pearls instead of tears, and a dreadful Dragon lives near by, in a place called Castle Dismal, who has carried her off; first, because he loves to see people who are in sorrow; and, secondly, because he wishes the treas-



ure of the Princess's tears. And now," said Happygolucky, bowing very low, "what we are to do about it, I think your royal highness had better himself tell me."

At this Merryheart laughed long and joyously. "This, sweet dwarf," said he, "must be the adventure that we have so long sought. We will save this Princess, Happygolucky. It is very simple. I shall go to Castle Dismal and demand to see the Dragon. When he comes, I shall tell him to give up the fair Dolorosa; should he refuse, or even hesitate, I shall cut off his head with this sword, and carry her away. In any case, she is saved."

"May it please your royal highness," said Happygolucky, "the Dragon breathes fire; he has seven blue tails and three heads."

"And what is all that to me?" replied the Prince.

"But he has already taken and killed many noble knights, and they tell me that he minds a sword-thrust no more than a pin-prick."

"We shall see. Lead on!" said Merryheart.

So through the throng of people they went; Happygolucky crying out, in a loud voice: "Make way for the noble Merryheart! Make way for the Prince! Make way for the champion who this day shall fight with the Dragon."



At this every one fell back, some laughing at the stripling who seemed so bold, and others sighing that one so fair and young should be the next victim of the frightful Dragon.

In this way the Prince and his dwarf reached at length the palace gates, where a herald met them, with a request from the King that they should enter. Following him, therefore, to the audience-chamber, they found a vast number of knights and ladies, and in the midst, on a throne of gold, their majesties themselves.

“Who art thou, and what thy station?” said the King to Merryheart, as he advanced and knelt, cap in hand, before the throne.

“May it please your Majesty,” answered he, “I am Merryheart, Prince of a country many miles away, and I have come to try if I may save your daughter, the beautiful Princess Dolorosa.”

At this the Queen, who had been weeping, looked over the edge of her handkerchief at Merryheart, and then whispered something in her royal husband’s ear, at which the King nodded.

“Fair Prince,” said he, “the Queen is pleased with thy gentle bearing; welcome to this land. We greet thy coming. Save but our daughter, and she is thine; but should the dragon kill thee, be assured of a funeral suitable to thy rank and station.”



At this Merryheart bowed again very low, the herald blew his trumpet as a sign that the conversation was at an end, and the Prince and Happygolucky found themselves again in the open air, while in the distance stood black and drearily against the sky, the walls and turrets of Castle Dismal.

All next day they journeyed, and all that night, and the next gleam of morning found them before the huge portal of the Dragon's palace.

"Give me our royal visiting card," said the Prince to Happygolucky, and without pausing he reached up on tiptoe and let fall the knocker. The hollow sound of brass on iron came fearfully through the heavy air, and in a few moments a slide was drawn, and the ugly head of a misshapen dwarf was thrust into the opening.

"What seek ye?" said he scowling, and in a voice that sounded like nothing so much as a key turning in a rusty lock.

"I am Merryheart, and I seek speech with the Dragon," said the Prince, not at all abashed. "Take thou this card, and tell him so."

At this the dwarf laughed loudly. "My master the Dragon shall come, be not afraid," he answered. "It is our breakfast hour, but he will be pleased to see thee. His faithful servitor, Sulkina-



corner, will tell him of thy coming," and closing the slide he disappeared.

So Merryheart sat down on the doorstep and waited, while Happygolucky began again his favorite game of jackstones. Presently, however, the Prince grew tired waiting; and hearing voices within, and noting the stout ivy that grew on the castle walls, he asked the dwarf if he would not climb up by means of the vine, and try if he might not see into one of the windows above. Happygolucky, nothing loath, complied, and looking in through one of these, beheld the poor little Princess shivering and weeping in a corner, with chains on her delicate wrists; while by her side grinned the ugly dwarf, and across the room, his little fiery red eyes fixed on Dolorosa, and his horrid scaly blue tails taking up most of the remaining space, sat the Dragon.

At this Happygolucky grew very much excited, and called loudly to the Prince to come up. Merryheart, therefore, seized hold of the tough ivy tendrils, and in a moment found himself beside his faithful dwarf. No sooner, however, had he caught sight of the weeping Princess, than he saw at once that this was the little girl of the mirror, and, with a great cry, he leaped right through the window into the room, and drawing his sword, called upon the Dragon to surrender.



At this the Dragon became very much enraged. His three heads uplifted, breathing fire, and quivering all over with wrath, he advanced toward Merryheart, who bravely held his ground.

Step by step came the Dragon, and the little Princess covered her face with her hands and shrieked aloud. Just as he reached Merryheart, the Prince drew his sword and dealt him a frightful blow, but the bright steel glanced off the Dragon's scaly hide and flew in splinters to the other side of the room. And now, indeed, it seemed all up with the Prince and Princess; the Dragon's fiery breath smote Merryheart full in the face, and the air was black with smoke and heavy with sulphur; the Dragon was almost upon him, for Merryheart knew how to die, but had not learned to retreat. Nearer and nearer he came, when the Princess, who had been watching, in turn sprang to her feet, and catching the Prince's cloak in her hands tried to pull him backward, beseeching him at the same time to fly and leave her to her fate.

But her despairing movement had uncovered the crystal ball beneath Merryheart's cloak, hanging from its golden chain, and now, in the darkness of smoke and sulphur, it gleamed like molten fire. Brighter and brighter, and the Dragon fell back before the radiance; — brighter still, and



the ugly dwarf fled with a howl of rage and despair; brighter, till a ray of liquid sunshine, coming straight as an arrow from the golden sphere, fell full upon the hideous Dragon and pierced him to the heart.

The brave little Prince and the fair little Princess and Happygolucky were saved, and Dolorosa, for the first time since her christening, stopped weeping, and, throwing her arms round Merryheart's neck, thanked him as only a royal Princess can thank the hero who has just delivered her.

And so the spell was broken, for in that embrace the crystal ball had rested on Dolorosa's breast long enough to dispel all gloom and sorrow. The Princess was found, and Merryheart's travels happily over. And some one who knows has told me that from that day onward the Princess was never known to weep, but became joyous as she was beautiful, which was quite all that one could wish. The crystal ball, having completed its mission, was never seen again; but some people think that it found its way out of fairyland, where, after all, it was hardly needed, and since then one may sometimes find on this planet an earth child, who, like the Prince of this story, wears the talisman next his heart.



THE FASCINATING GRIFFIN.















## THE FASCINATING GRIFFIN.

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MANY years ago, in the heart of a strange and wonderful country, there stood a mighty forest, in which, because of the thickness of the trees and the density of the foliage, it was always twilight, however fiercely the sun above it might be blazing.

So dark was it, indeed, and so vast, that but few people had ever ventured further than the outskirts, but these told in whispers of glimpses caught of some horrible monster that dwelt there, of strange sights and dreadful sounds, so that before long the village folk spoke of the forest as enchanted. After this not one of them would have entered for anything. Had they done so they would probably have been very much frightened, for they would have been sure to meet the Griffin who made the woods his home.

Now, the Griffin was very dreadful to look upon. He had, to begin with, a hard, scaly blue skin, and an immense tail with a dart on the end, eyes that blazed like fire, tremendous wings, and paws like



those of a lion. For all that, the villagers, had they but known it, need not have been afraid after all, for in spite of his terrible appearance, the Griffin was kindness itself, and would not have hurt one of them for the world.

Meanwhile his story was, without doubt, a sad one. Not very long before, the Griffin had not been a Griffin at all, but a young and handsome Prince, his present uncomfortable condition being due entirely to the anger of a wicked fairy, who had changed him by her magic art into the form which he now held. The worst of it was that this dreadful state of things was to last until some Princess, of her own free will, should fall in love with him and tell him so; and when the poor Griffin beheld his own frightful image in the clear lake that served him for a mirror, the chance of this happening seemed very far away indeed.

At first he was so discouraged and unhappy, that, having fled from his kingdom to the depths of the forest, he made up his mind to die rather than live on in his present shape and endure his wretched lot; but after a time he began again to hope, if very faintly.

“I may not be handsome,” thought the poor Griffin, “and appearances certainly are against me; but at least I can cultivate my mind and manners, and see if I may not efface, by my good breeding,



the impression that in the beginning I must, I fear, necessarily convey.”

With this end in view, the Griffin decided to leave the forest, for he wisely reflected that where there was nobody to impress he could not expect, no matter how great his charm of manner, to successfully impress anybody, and in this light his new resolve seemed so sensible that on that very hour, the Griffin prepared to set forth.

It took some time, however, to reach the border of his leafy dwelling-place, and to cross the plains and meadows that lay between the wood and the village, so it was not until sunset that the Griffin found himself at the end of his journey.

He had beguiled the way with thoughts of how he should greet these good people, his nearest neighbors; but here, alas! a sad surprise was in store for him.

Instead of listening or even waiting to hear his opening remarks, the townsfolk, one and all, on catching sight of him had taken to their heels; and when the Griffin, much surprised and perplexed, walked up the principal street, he found it altogether deserted, and every door and window of the cottages at either side tightly closed.

In vain did the Griffin put on his most amiable expression, in vain did he urge the inhabitants most affably to come forth; his smiles, his courte-



ous words, his high breeding and charm of manner were alike ignored, nor did he receive the least attention, unless the handful of stones thrown at him by a small boy might be accounted as such. The stones rattled harmlessly off the plates of the Griffin's natural armor, but the action hurt his tender feelings, and went far to show him how greatly his kind intentions had been misunderstood.

Sadly, therefore, the Griffin went on his way through the lonely streets, until he came to the public square, and there he beheld a sight that put every emotion save that of admiration to flight. For, standing fearlessly, directly in his path, was the most beautiful milkmaid the Griffin had ever seen. Her golden hair rippled in natural waves, and was fastened with an ivory comb in the prettiest way in the world; her sleeves were rolled up, showing her round white arms, with the most fascinating dimple at the elbow; her eyes were brown, and made you think of roses and music and moonlight seen through mist; the striped petticoat revealed two bewitching little feet in high-heeled shoes that were fastened with silver buckles;—and the result of all this loveliness was that the Griffin forgot everything, even his good manners, and stared at the pretty milkmaid as long and as hard as ever he could.

However, she did not seem to mind it, for she had



only grown a little pale at first, and now the warm rose-leaf color was coming back to her cheeks again. Putting her milking-stool on the ground, she dropped a courtesy, and said in the sweetest, most musical voice, to the Griffin, "I bid you good-evening."

At this the Griffin somewhat recovered himself and his manners, and replied to the courtesy by a most exquisite bow. Finding his tongue at last, he answered the salutation in kind; and then, taking courage, he spoke of the weather, of his object in coming to the village, and of the strange conduct of the inhabitants.

At this the milkmaid shook her head.

"They are uncultivated people, and don't know any better," said she, "and they are apt to be taken in by appearances. However," she continued politely, "I am sorry that it should have happened," and then, as if to make up for the behavior of the townsfolk, she asked the Griffin if he would not like to stroll with her for a while outside in the meadow.

To this the Griffin assented joyfully, and politely offered to carry the milking-stool. So together they began their walk — the pretty milkmaid talking all the time, and the Griffin listening and saying just the right word in the right place.

"To begin with, you must know that I am a Prin-



cess," said she, "that is, I was yesterday, and will be to-morrow. To-day I am just a milkmaid, and that is the reason I can talk to you and walk with you without an introduction. You see, I read in so many books that poor people were the happiest, that I thought I would try being a milkmaid, for I fancied that they had an especially good time. But it is not really very nice to be one, and I am very much afraid of cows; so I decided, just before I met you, to go back to the palace this evening."

By this time they had reached the meadow without the village, and the Griffin, politely setting down the stool, brushed away the dust from the top with the end of his tail, and begged the Princess to be seated.

She seated herself at once, and the Griffin, finding a comfortable rock near by, followed her example.

"My name is Rosabella," continued the Princess, "and the only reason that I don't want to go back is because I fear that my councillors will force me to marry."

At this the Griffin turned very pale, and his eyes flashed fire.

"I may be only a Griffin, but I have my feelings," he said, in a voice choked with emotion. He was trembling all over, and the Princess stopped in amazement.

"What can be the matter?" she asked, in sur-



prise ; but at this the Griffin subdued himself with an effort, and murmured something about attacks of this sort being common in his family.

Rosabella did not altogether understand, but she was very much interested in what she was saying, so without urging any further explanation she went on, "To-morrow a suitor will come for my hand. I have never seen him, but they tell me that he is very handsome." The Griffin sighed deeply.

"He is fair, with blue eyes, and hair that shines like spun flax. Do you like that kind of a man?"

"No!" thundered the Griffin in a terrible voice, forgetting everything, and brought to himself only by the startled look on the Princess's face.

She rose hastily.

"I must be going back to the palace," she said, and indeed it had begun to grow dark.

The Griffin felt very badly, but he was too polite to combat the Princess's resolution. He, therefore, arose also, and remained with his wings folded over his face — a sign of deep respect — until she had quite disappeared in the distance.

When this had happened he again seated himself, but he could think of nothing but the beautiful Princess, and the more he thought of her the sadder he grew, for he felt assured that he would



never never see her again, and if he did she would never never deign to look at him.

He remembered his own hideous form, and he thought of her perfect loveliness, and then it all came over him, and he groaned aloud, so that the villagers trembled, thinking it the muttering of a thunderstorm, and wondered much to see the sky so clear.

After a time, however, the Griffin arose and began to go slowly in the direction that the Princess had taken, and when he had followed in her steps for some hours, he at length beheld the turrets and spires of a great city shining like silver in the moonlight, while near at hand he beheld a sort of cavern hollowed in the rocks.

“Here,” said the Griffin to himself, “will I make, for the present, my abode,” and entering, he stretched himself upon the sandy floor, and was soon dreaming happily of Rosabella.

Meanwhile the Princess, having returned home by means of a chariot drawn by six milk-white horses that had been waiting near, was thinking busily in turn of her encounter with the Griffin.

She had been very much struck indeed by his beautiful manners and courtly bearing; and although she was aware how slight were his claims to beauty, the fact had impressed her but



little, while his brilliant conversation and his attentive listening to her own remarks had seemed to her, on the other hand, both astonishing and delightful. In fact, she could hardly think of anything else, and the ladies of her court found her much distracted whilst they related the events that had transpired in her absence. She received the beautiful gifts that had been sent her by her fair-haired suitor with indifference, and the preparations for his welcome did not seem to interest her.

On meeting the Griffin first in the village square, she had been, it is true, rather frightened for the moment, but she remembered her royal birth and how rude it would be to show any surprise or terror at any one's appearance, and the Griffin's air of distinction had soon reassured her. Now, she remembered with sorrow that she had left him abruptly and had forgotten to ask him to call, or yet where he lived, and she began to weep bitterly and would not be comforted.

But the preparations for a grand feast went on nevertheless, and the third day all was ready.

Strings of beautiful roses hung in festoons from the windows of the houses of the city, velvet carpets covered the streets, sweetest music filled the air, hosts of song birds in golden cages hung from arches built of flowers, wine played in the



fountains, all the gingerbread was gilt, and beautiful colored bonbons were scattered everywhere.

In the throne room of the palace all was even more beautiful; precious stones flashed, perfumes filled the air, and under a canopy of royal purple velvet studded with diamond stars, was the chair of state where the Princess was to sit, and this was made of purest gold.

As for the Princess herself, she was dazzling to look upon in her white satin gown with its train of cloth of silver, embroidered with pearls and shining like the moon. On her golden hair the crown of state, and in her hand the sceptre of power. No wonder the Prince shaded his eyes with his hand when he entered and first beheld her.

Well, there were a great many ceremonies, and the Princess grew rather cross and very sleepy.

First a page in rose-color and green came out and announced the Prince's coming, and named over all his titles; and then an old, old councillor arose and talked for a long time about things no one understood or cared for, and every one looked very solemn and impressed. Then another old man in trailing robes of state made a speech wishing joy to the Princess and welcoming the Prince; and last of all the Prince himself came forward, and kneeling on one knee, besought the Princess to



accept his hand and kingdom. At this all the people cheered, for the Prince had scattered gold among them in the morning, and when the noise had ceased, the Princess also stood up, as a sign that she was to speak, and then every one was silent. The Prime Minister handed her a scroll with everything written on it that she was expected to repeat, but she pushed it away and began — and all the time she was thinking of the Griffin and of his graceful bearing, much more than of the Prince before her.

She thanked them all very prettily for their good wishes, and the Prince for his trouble, and so far all was well; then she said that she hoped that he would enjoy his visit, but — and here all the statesmen began to look alarmed — she should on no account marry for some time.

Rosabella then sat down, and in a very determined way, but an uproar immediately began, every one talking at once and arguing and quarrelling; the Prince stood up looking very sulky and cross, and the councillors of the court flocked about the Princess, entreating, scolding, begging, until Rosabella put her rosy fingers to her ears and declined to listen to another word. And in the midst of all this confusion something happened. The great folding doors at the end of the room swung open, and striding through them and right



among the horrified mass of nobles and court ladies, came a massive figure, and the people fell on their knees and cried aloud in terror, —

“The Giant Furioso!”

Straight to the throne came the Giant, and the councillors fled before him, and the Prince hid behind a marble pillar; but the Princess, though she turned very white, still held her ground.

“What seek ye, and why come ye hither?” she asked in her clear voice. “We have yet to learn that it befits our rank and condition to receive in this unseemly manner a stranger to our courts and land.”

“Thunder and lightning!” said the Giant in a voice like the muttering of an earthquake, so that all the people shivered with dread. “Methinks I need but little heralding at this noble court. Methinks the good people of this land have cause to know me without such stately usage. As for an invitation, I need none, and I await none. I come hither of my own will and on my own pleasuring, nor do I return alone, for thou, fair Princess, art to accompany me.”

At this, a wail of sorrow and despair arose from every throat, but the Princess, white as death, remained calm and composed, as befitted her royal training.

“Furioso,” said she, “thou sayest well. We



have cause to know thee. Many are the homes that thou hast plundered, many the fair flocks thou hast despoiled. Nevertheless, I yield me not until the last extremity, but appeal to the law regarded by men and giants alike, claiming three days wherein to find a champion to do battle in my behalf. Be he vanquished, I am thy victim; be thou conquered, seek for no further mercy from the hands of Rosabella."

"'Tis well," said the Giant with a grim smile. "Albeit thou findest such a champion, then do I hold myself in readiness to meet him."

Saying which he strode from the room, leaving confusion and despair behind him.

During all this time the Griffin had remained sadly within the dark recesses of the cavern, and all his thought both day and night was of the lovely Rosabella whom he had met in the village; but the more he thought of her the more unhappy did he grow, his horrible fate hung over him like a black cloud, and his heart came near breaking, so filled was it with love and anguish.

His dwelling-place was so near the city, however, that he was able to see those who entered and those who came away; and on the first day of his hiding he noticed a gay and costly train of prancing steeds in gold and jewelled trappings, and men clad in foreign garments of strange and beautiful



stuffs. In the midst of these rode a young man with hair like flax, whom, with a sinking heart, the Griffin recognized as the Prince who was to wed the lovely Rosabella. At this a great rage filled his breast, and he could hardly forbear to tear him to pieces, and scatter the lordly train; but out of respect for the Princess, he overcame his wrath, though the effort made him feel extremely ill. Waiting, therefore, he remained in dreary solitude until the close of the third day, when a noise and clamor as of many voices and of hurrying feet reached him, and gazing in astonishment, he beheld the Prince and his servitors flying homeward down the dusty road with every appearance of fear and haste.

This all seemed very strange to the Griffin, and his curiosity grew more and more intense every moment. Nevertheless he waited with what patience he might until evening, when he sallied forth and soon reached the palace gate. Inscribed on this in great letters of brass that shone in the moonlight, was an inscription which said that for three days the Giant Furioso would do combat with all comers for the hand of the Princess Rosabella, and at the end of the third day, should no one appear in her defence, or should Furioso remain the victor, the Giant should claim the Princess as his own. When he read this, the Griffin's face was



quite terrible to look upon, such was his wrath and so hot his indignation; but not having eaten anything for a long time, he had grown rather weak, so he decided to wait until the end of the third day before fighting with the Giant, and meanwhile to spend the remaining hours in preparation for the conflict.

As the time went by and no one appeared to do battle in her cause, poor Rosabella's hope grew fainter and fainter, and the Giant more disagreeable, ugly, and boastful. Every day at the ringing of a certain bell, the people flocked to a public square, and Furioso appeared and made his challenge; but though they were all sorry for the poor little Princess, and loved her dearly, no one dared to accept her quarrel, and so the chance of her deliverance seemed to grow less and less.

At last the third day came, and trembling and pale Rosabella took her place upon the throne, and the Giant strode into the open ring below it.

"Who champions the Princess's cause?" cried he in a loud voice, but no one replied.

"Who champions the Princess's cause?" he asked again, but still there was silence.

Then in the awful quiet, he called again aloud and for the last time, —

"Who champions the Princess's cause?"

And in loud and ringing tones came the answer, "That do I."



And at this there was a great stir among the people. They fell back on every side, and there before them all, Rosabella, her court, the nobles, and the multitude, appeared the Griffin; and the Princess was so delighted that she just sat there and cried till her point-lace handkerchief was as wet as wet could be.

Then began a most tremendous battle, and the most gigantic blows rained thick and fast.

Furioso bellowed with anger, and the Griffin rumbled with wrath, and the sparks flew, and the ground was torn up on every side, and at last, after hours of the most bitter fighting, the combat was over, and Furioso lay on the ground quite dead. Then the Griffin arose, and bending before the throne said to Rosabella, with a courtly manner all his own, "May it please your Serene Highness, Furioso is no more."

And having made this declaration, the Griffin turned, and gently waving aside all thanks, started in the direction of his cave.

At this the Princess became very much alarmed for fear of losing him again, and, calling a page, she told him to run behind the Griffin all the way until he might return with news of his home, but on no account to approach him or trouble him with questions.

This, indeed, the page had no great desire to



do; but as the Griffin went straight to his cave, he was soon able to come back to the Princess with news of what she wanted to know, and on learning the Griffin's address, Rosabella was so delighted that she presented the boy with a bag of marbles richly ornamented, making him at the same time captain in the first corps of Royal Popgun Shooters, a most honorable and responsible position.

Then she retired into strict privacy and sat down to think. To begin with, the Griffin had gone away without claiming the offered reward, which was the hand of Rosabella herself, but this the Princess judged rightly, after a prolonged survey of the mirror, to be more from delicacy than from any lack of inclination.

Now it remained for her to tell him, her darling Griffin and brave Champion, her own feelings in the matter. Nevertheless, she had a great regard for propriety, and she wanted the thing conducted in a manner befitting a royal Princess. So she wrinkled her pretty white forehead, and rubbed her dimpled chin, and thought and thought, but all to no purpose. Then she rang for her ladies in waiting, and sent for all the books on etiquette to be found in her dominions, but these did not help her a bit, and finally, in despair, she decided to send for the Griffin and await inspiration.

So a pretty little three-cornered note was writ-



ten, in which the pleasure of the Griffin's company at five o'clock tea was requested, and this being despatched by a messenger boy, the Princess began to feel better, and went to try on various costumes to see which would be the most becoming.

Now the Griffin, when he received the note, was in a great state of mind. At first he thought he wouldn't, and then he thought he would. First, he was afraid that the Princess, on nearer view, would grow to hate him, and then the longing to see her drove everything else out of his mind. First, he thought he would plead illness, or another engagement, or the want of a dress suit, and then he felt that he would surely die unless he could come, and finally, in this frame of mind, he accepted, and the thing was done and past undoing.

Then he sat up all that night and most of the following day until the hour named, and polished his scales till they shone like steel, and tried otherwise to make himself more presentable, and promptly at five o'clock he presented himself at the palace door, and asked to see the Princess.

The footman, however, catching sight of the visitor, fled in terror to hide, instead of waiting to announce him; so the Griffin was forced to walk in without ceremony; and there in the parlor, in the loveliest gown, with jewels in her hair and on her breast and on her fingers, seated



smiling at him from behind the teapot, was the Princess.

The Griffin wanted to fall at her feet then and there, but instead he only carefully shut the door behind him, and bade Rosabella good-afternoon in the most natural way imaginable.

"I am so glad to see you," said the Princess, dimpling and smiling, "pray take a chair." And then she began to blush, for the Griffin would indeed have found difficulty in seating himself on any of the palace furniture, if at all. However, he did not seem to notice, but looked as amiable as possible, and thanked her for her kindness.

"You were *so* good to save me from that horrid Giant," said the Princess, and she smiled very sweetly indeed.

"Oh! that was a mere bagatelle," said the Griffin gracefully.

"Your teapot is very pretty," then said the Griffin.

"Oh, thank you," said the Princess. "It is blue, and I have always admired blue so much," and she looked hard at the Griffin's scales, but the Griffin did not fancy for a moment that she could mean anything personal, so he only sighed and said nothing. Finally, —

"Let us play a game," said the Princess, and of course the Griffin assented.



“Do you know ‘I love my love with an A, because she is amiable’?” asked Rosabella, and the Griffin said at once that he did, and that furthermore, it was the game of all others that he most admired.

“Very well,” said the Princess, “then I shall begin. I love my love with an A, because he is adorable.”

And she blushed and cast down her eyes.

“I love my love with a B, because she is beautiful,” said the Griffin, and he, too, grew very much embarrassed.

“I love my love with a C, because he is courtly,” said the Princess, and she looked harder than ever at the Griffin.

“I love my love with a D, because she is delightful,” said the Griffin, and he sighed again, only louder.

“I love my love with an E, because he is in earnest,” said the Princess.

“I love my love with an F, because she is fair,” replied the Griffin.

“I love my love with a G, because,” — and now the Princess grew rosy red, and her voice trembled, “because he’s a — Griffin,” she said finally, and then covered her face with her hands.

And at this a great light entered the room, and outside the birds began to sing, and when Rosa-



bella looked up, lo ! there on his knees before her and kissing the hem of her garment was — no Griffin after all, but a young and handsome Prince, who, rising, caught her in his arms and called her, in a voice sweeter than anything she had ever heard, “his deliverer, his joy, and his heart’s delight forever.”

This, then, was what happened to the Griffin, and all on account of his engaging manners, and if Rosabella had loved him before in spite of his hideous form, how dearly must she have loved him now that he was restored to his own proper shape again.

And so, as all good story-tellers have it, they grew more fair and fond each day, and lived happily together forever after.







PRINCESS ASTRA AND THE  
SERPENT STONE.















## PRINCESS ASTRA AND THE SERPENT STONE.

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ONCE upon a time there lived a King and Queen, and they yearned for a baby girl more than for anything else in the world.

“How her little golden curls would catch the sunshine even in the dark corridors of the palace,” thought the Queen; and, —

“How musical would be the sound of her little pattering feet,” thought the King, and though neither spoke, they both sighed.

And now, because of their patience and their sorrow and their longing, the good fairies at length took pity on them, and one day when the Queen was sitting musing over her embroidery in the garden, a shadow darkened the air, and looking up she beheld a great stork with outstretched wings, whiter than snow, who bore in his beak a tiny bundle.

Nearer and nearer he came, and at last he poised himself for a moment directly over the Queen and



the next instant something fell straight into her Royal Highness's lap, and when Her Majesty looked up, lo ! the stork was but a speck in the blue sky overhead. And while the Queen was wondering at all this, a little cry sounded in her ears, and the something in the bundle in her lap fluttered and stirred.

"My crown and sceptre !" thought the Queen, "what have we here ?" and hastily with trembling fingers she undid the blue ribbon with which the package was tied, and when she had done so, she gave a cry so full of joy and astonishment that every one in the palace, from the Grand Vizier to the Chief Cook, came running out into the garden. And once there what do you suppose they saw ?

Why, her Royal Highness crying and laughing at once, for very happiness, and in her lap the most beautiful little baby girl in the world, with golden curls just as the Queen had wished, and with great deep violet eyes that shone like stars.

"Bless my soul !" said the King, and he pushed his crown way over on the side of his head, so great was his surprise.

"Goo, goo, mum, goo, gar," said the baby, and then she thrust four dimpled fingers and one tiny thumb into her rosebud mouth.

"Call the Court Interpreter," said the King to a page, but when the Court Interpreter heard for



what he was wanted, he went and hid himself in the darkest part of the cellar underneath the palace, and the page came back trembling to tell the King.

“Ha!” said His Majesty in an awful voice, when he heard what the Court Interpreter had done, “drag him forth! Cut off his head! Bring him here at once. Shall our royal daughter’s first remark go unexplained and unheeded? Ho, there, my men at arms! Hum! ho! ha!” and he looked so dreadful in his wrath that all the people fell flat on their faces, and the royal bodyguard tumbled one over another in their wild efforts to reach the King first. And now no one could have told what would have happened had not the baby just then, frightened by all this noise and commotion, begun to cry.

“There!” said the Queen, turning to her royal consort, “there, I thought that you’d do something of the kind. What do you mean by frightening the little lamb half to death? Muzzer’s ittle petsy wetsy. There, there, don’t cry. Cutting off heads, indeed! Go away!”

“But, my dear!” protested the King feebly, but he looked so very much afraid of his wife that the little page who had run on the message, had to cough several times loudly in order to hide his laughter.



“Oh, don’t talk to *me*!” said the Queen. “Go away,” and she looked so fierce, and so much like a motherly hen defending her chickens, that His Majesty was more frightened than ever, only just then he caught sight of the page who had laughed, winking at another of the royal suite, and rapped him smartly on the head with his sceptre, which made His Majesty feel a little better.

“Since you really wish it, my dear,” he said, “we may as well adjourn,” and he walked off with as much dignity as the situation would allow. And that was how the Princess Astra, for so she was shortly named, came to dwell in the royal palace, and be the much-longed-for daughter of the King and Queen.

Well, the years rolled on, and soon, instead of a baby carried laughing and crowing in her nurse’s arms, the old pictures of former royal personages looked down upon a little girl in short frocks and with a happy, rosy face, who trotted hither and thither, and was busy from morning till night. First, there was Alfarita, her best doll and dearest companion to talk to, and in whom to confide plans and secrets; there was the daily number of mud pies to stir and mix, and, finally, bake in the sun; there were the long walks through the rose-gardens, where the tall flowers nodded above her head; and sometimes a stolen run past the gate of the palace,



when it had accidentally been left open, and out and away for perhaps an hour or more, on a tour of discovery in the great world without.

Princess Astra was busy enough, to be sure, and when she tired of all these things, she would creep sometimes quietly into the audience-room and listen to the long speeches, and see the funny costumes of people from all over the country ; or tease the Grand Vizier for fairy tales, or play with the Queen's jewels, and string rows on rows of rubies, diamonds, and pearls.

This sort of thing went on, till one day the good Queen died, and the King sent for little Astra, and had a long talk with her.

"You are getting to be a big girl," said he, and Astra noticed and wondered why his eyes were so red, and why his voice trembled, "and now that your dear mother is gone, we must try to do what she would like in the matter of your education."

"I don't want my dear mother to be gone. I want to be with her," said the little Princess.

"I cannot help that," said the King sadly ; "but, at least, though you may not see her, or be with her for many days, still you may make her heart glad by being a good girl, and doing what you are told by the teachers I shall procure for you."

"Very well," said Astra, and her eyes looked very big and solemn, and she slipped down from



the King's knee, and ran off to tell Alfarita all that her father had said. And now, after that, daily lessons began; and Astra found that there were books and books to be learned, and things to be studied of which she had never dreamed. There was the Master of Deportment, who came twice a week and taught her how to sit down, how to stand up, and how to make court courtesies. There was the First Lady in Waiting, who insisted upon the Princess Astra's having her hair put up in curl papers every single night, and who practised her in saying "prunes and prisms" three times daily, to give her mouth a pretty shape when talking. There was the Lord High Huntsman, who taught her how to ride and how to shoot with bow and arrow; and there was the Chief Councillor, who made her learn and repeat long speeches, beginning, "My Lords and Ladies, and you, the good people of my realm;" and last, but by no means least, the Morning and the Afternoon Tutor, who taught her everything alphabetically, beginning with the properties of acorns and apple-carts, and going on down and through the list.

And this continued until her seventeenth birthday, when a great fête was given; at the end of which Astra, seated upon a chair of state, only a step lower than the King's own throne, was presented with a long roll of parchment, on which, in



letters of gold, was written in ten languages the fact that the Princess Astra, having completed her education, now fully understood all that a royal princess should know, and quite all her many teachers had been able to impart.

After this there was more feasting and more speech-making, but at last even the little page, whose duty it was to hold up Astra's train, had had enough, and long before he had arrived at this condition the very wisest statesmen, and the very oldest, could think of nothing more to say. So, after mutual greetings and good wishes, even this brilliant festivity came to an end.

Well, the days rolled on, and now Astra found herself rather lonely. She was too old to play, and she was too learned to study, and so the hours hung heavily upon her idle hands, though she passed many of them over her embroidery, and still many more in the garden, where she wove beautiful wreaths of flowers or strung long chains of roses, and had marvellous and lovely waking dreams of what she should do, and what great things she would accomplish some day, far, far off in the golden future. But, at length, there was a sorrowful and sudden interruption to her hours of happy dreaming, for Astra's father died suddenly one night, and the next day, instead of orderly preparations for his daughter's coronation



going on in the palace, the wildest distress and confusion reigned. For a message had come by a swift-footed herald, who bore the tidings of the approach of a wicked and powerful King, at the head of a great army, who was coming to take possession of the throne that now belonged by right to the Princess Astra herself.

On hearing this, most of the courtiers ran away ; some to hide themselves from the sight and wrath of the usurping monarch, and others to throw themselves at his feet, and, declaring their allegiance, to beg for mercy ; and those who remained were so stupefied by terror as to be of no possible use or even comfort to the poor deserted Princess, who alone among them all remained calm and steadfast.

Indeed, in Astra's veins flowed only royal blood ; the kingdom was hers and hers only, and it was her place to defend her rights, if need be, with her life itself, though single-handed and alone.

In vain, therefore, did her subjects entreat her to fly ; she resolutely refused to do so ; and when, at last, finding all remonstrance useless, her attendants themselves fled, she remained tranquilly alone in the palace of her fathers.

So the days rolled on, and tidings came thick and fast of destruction and terror, and of the rapid approach of the usurping monarch, only



Astra heard in her solitude none of these things, until one morning the long roll of drums, the silvery call of trumpets, and the steady tramp of mailed feet announced to her listening ears the news that the invading army had really come.

And now, for the first time, the heart of the Princess beat a little faster, but she was a king's daughter and not easily afraid.

"I am alone," thought she, "but I shall receive this monarch in my proper place, and in a manner befitting my royal station," and going hastily to her chamber, she arrayed herself in the robes of state, and letting loose her long, golden hair, she placed the crown upon her head with her own white hands, and with stately tread and unfaltering mien she left her room, and entering the Hall of State, mounted the throne, and looking every inch a queen, there awaited the coming of her enemy.

Nor, indeed, did she have long to wait, for soon on the outer gate of the palace was heard a loud knocking, as from gauntleted hands, and in a moment the loud jar of brass against brass told Astra that the outer portal had been forced open. And now, on the marble pavement, resounded the clank of marching feet, which came steadily nearer — on through the wide halls and stately chambers of the palace, until the door of the throne-room



itself was reached, and there the sound ceased, and the multitude without stood waiting — for an instant only — the next, the portal was thrown open, and over the threshold stepped the usurping monarch himself, clad in full armor, and bearing in one hand a naked sword.

Astra arose and stood waiting, and at the sound the King raised his eyes and then started back, for never in his life before had he beheld so beautiful a vision.

There was a low murmur of astonishment among the waiting throng, and then silence. Astra herself was the first to speak.

“Whom have we here?” said she, in her low, musical voice, and fixing her eyes upon the King as if calling him to account for his presence. “Who is it that thus, at the head of armed men, intrudes himself upon our privacy?”

For a moment there was silence, but the eyes of the King flashed fire.

“Fair lady,” said he, with mock courtesy, “prithee, pardon our unseemly haste wherewith, inspired by the report of thy great beauty, we have forced ourselves into thy presence; and pardon also, we entreat, our desire to see if thy loveliness be enhanced by the presents which, hoping to please thy fastidious taste, we have made so bold as to bring thee.” And, motioning to a slave, he bade



him carry forward a casket set with precious stones, such as was used in those days when one monarch wished to bestow some gift as a token of kindness and good will upon another. This was placed upon a cushion of ruby velvet, and the King, advancing to the throne, knelt on one knee before it, and then rising, mounted the steps and seized the Princess by the wrist, and so tightly that the iron gauntlet bruised her delicate flesh. Half-supporting, half-dragging her to the spot where lay the casket that the slave had brought, the King touched a secret spring, and the cover flying open, Astra beheld within a glittering heap of golden chains.

“These,” said the King, “are the presents which we have brought thee, fair Princess, in token of our royal favor,” and, calling to his men-at-arms, he commanded them to load Astra with the fetters; and in a moment she stood before them all, still calm, still fearless, but bending like a broken lily beneath their cruel weight.

Still smiling, the King again turned.

“These be but rough maids for one so fair,” said he, pointing to her guards, “but of thy royal clemency forgive their clumsy manners. And now,” he added, “we will not detain thee longer, or trespass on thy patience; rather, shall we beg thee to retire and rest while, by thy good leave, we will endeavor to furnish and to find entertainment



for these our faithful followers," and, calling one of his soldiers, he commanded him to lead Astra away; and soon the poor Princess found herself once more deserted and alone, but no longer free, for, still weighted with chains, she was cast into a dark and loathsome dungeon, there to await the pleasure of her conqueror.

And now the poor Princess was indeed filled with bitter sorrow. At first, so great was her grief she could hardly raise her eyes to look around her, but sat with her head in her hands, while the big tears crept through her fingers and fell in pearly drops to the floor of her prison. Finally, however, she sat up, and tried to find out something of the cell into which she had been thrown, but the attempt was all in vain, for the only light came from a tiny window overhead, and the sunbeams that had strayed in through that opening had become disheartened long before they had penetrated the darkness that lay beneath, enveloping the poor Princess like a veil.

Astra, therefore, stretched out her hand to touch the wall on either side, and find at least the length and breadth of her dungeon, but the movement made her golden fetters ring again, and reminded her so painfully of her captivity that she gave up this attempt also in despair.

Suddenly, however, a rough grating noise was



heard, and the door of her cell opening, a handful of straw, a lighted lamp, a loaf of bread, and a stone jug of water was pushed silently within, and retreating steps told the Princess that her jailer had visited her for the night.

At first the idea of eating in this wretched place was so repugnant to Astra that she turned her back upon her humble supper in very scorn, but after a time the pangs of hunger began to assert themselves, and almost unconsciously she broke off a piece of bread, and began her solitary meal with far more appetite than she had ever brought to the magnificent banquets at which, in happier days, she had been wont to attend. And now the Princess raised the jug of water to her lips, but at that instant a ripple of elfin laughter reached her ears, and made her draw back in alarm. Again, and then by the fitful gleam of her lamp, the Princess beheld the funniest little figure, dressed all in green, and dripping wet, and, strangest of all, seated upon the very edge of the stone jug which she a moment before had been holding.

“Ho, ho, ho!” laughed the Elf, and he held on to his sides for very mirth, and rolled about so queerly that before Astra knew it, she too had broken into a laugh as silvery and clear as a chime of silver bells.

“There, that’s right,” said the little man, and he



slid down the handle of the jug, and taking out a tiny pocket-handkerchief that was fully an inch square, he began to wipe his funny little face and hands.

When he had quite finished this process to his own satisfaction, he climbed back to the edge of the jug, and crossing his knees, sighed contentedly and looked hard at Astra.

"You are the Princess," he said, at length, "and you have been thrown into prison by the Tyrant yonder," and he made a face in the supposed direction of the King's chamber. "Now, I have come to get you out," and he settled himself into a still more comfortable position.

"You are very kind," said Astra, but he looked so earnest, and so very small for so great a work, that she could hardly forbear smiling.

"Not at all," said the little man amiably, "and first let me relieve you of these," and touching the Princess's chains with his finger, they fell at once to the floor. "You see, I like you, and I don't like the King. It is very simple. I saw the jailer coming hither with your supper, and I tumbled into the jug of water before he knew it. That was to surprise you, and I think that I succeeded. Ho! ho! ho!" and he laughed again so heartily that Astra was in momentary terror for fear he should lose his balance and go over backwards



again into the water. Presently, however, the little mannikin quieted down.

"Now," he continued, "you are to do exactly as I bid you; and, by the way, perhaps I should introduce myself," and he rose with great dignity. "I am Hob, Prince of Goblins," he said.

"Happy to meet your highness," said the Princess courtesying.

"And I have thought of a splendid plan whereby you can make your escape. But, first, kindly cut off a lock of your beautiful golden hair," and he handed her a tiny dagger for the purpose.

The Princess did as she was requested, and again the little man resumed.

"Now, I am going to call a few of my followers, and while some of them braid this long tress into a ladder, others will knock out a hole in the wall for you to pass through, and when this is done, with my strong right arm will I aid you to descend. After doing which, all will be well."

"Oh, thank you," said the Princess, though she feared very much for the strength of a ladder made only of golden hair.

"Very well," said the Prince of the Goblins, and he rapped three times on the edge of the stone jug with the hilt of his tiny dagger. In an instant Astra heard the hurried pattering of hundreds of tiny feet, and soon from all sides swarmed numbers



of little men, who saluted her respectfully, and then pressed around their leader who had summoned them.

“Friends and subjects,” said Hob with dignity, “I have summoned you hither that you may aid me to effect the escape of the Princess Astra whom you now behold,” and in trying to make a low bow, he lost his balance for a moment, but turning a complete somersault, regained again his footing, and went on as if nothing had happened.

“Some of you make a ladder of this lock of her golden hair, and weave among the strands as you braid them the charm that will enable it to bear her weight. You others knock out a hole in the wall whereby she may get through; and while you are doing these things, I myself will divert her mind with my engaging manners and instructive conversation.”

At this there was some commotion, but soon all had set briskly to work, and while they did so, Hob related to the Princess his further designs for her well-being.

“There is a cottage,” said Hob, “which I know very well, and which I think would suit you exactly. There you can live in peace and quiet, and my willing followers will see that you never want for aught that they can procure for you. In return, if you will but kindly consent to sew on



an occasional button or mend a rent in our garments, we shall feel more than repaid.

"You see," he added, "Goblin tailors use cobweb thread invariably, and that is not very lasting, but if you will consent to take their place at odd times and on important occasions, the obligation, I assure you, would be very great."

"Why, I should be delighted," said Astra, and she laughed to herself at the thought of how small even a very big tear would be on those diminutive garments.

"That is splendid," said Hob, and he executed a figure of the hornpipe all by himself, and then jumped down from the top of the jug to the floor.

"See, they are ready," said he; and, sure enough, Astra saw the ladder quite finished and hanging outside from a large opening in the wall that the busy workers had made. She looked below, and then started back in affright.

"Oh, I can never go down there," she said, trembling. "Why, they have put me in the very turret of the palace, and it is miles to the ground."

"Oh, no, it isn't," said Hob encouragingly. "Just shut your eyes and trust to me," and he led her to the opening in the wall and told her to put her foot on the first rung of the ladder. Astra obeyed, though her heart seemed to leap into her



mouth with terror, and slowly, but surely, she descended, Hob uttering encouraging words, and the Goblins steadying the ladder whenever it threatened to sway beneath her weight.

“There!” said the Elfin Prince in triumph, and Astra, opening her eyes, found herself at length on solid ground, with the tower of the palace gleaming white in the moonlight, and far, far above her head.

“Good,” said Hob, “and now to the cottage,” and taking Astra by the hand, he ran along at such a tremendous pace that the poor Princess had to beg for mercy and stop frequently to take breath.

On and on they went, however, the Goblin troop close behind, till the palace was left in the far distance, and before them Astra saw a densely wooded forest.

“Here is to be your home,” said Hob, as they entered. And, sure enough, they were now on a little path that wound prettily in and out, and which, before long, led the whole party to a tiny cottage, painted red with white trimmings, that stood with open door, hospitably ajar, as if awaiting their arrival.

Astra loved it at first sight, and when on entering she beheld the clean sanded floor, the little white wood cane-seated chairs, the open fireplace,



with a fire already lighted on the hearth, and the bright brass kettle that hummed contentedly over the blaze, she felt indeed as if the splendid palace of her fathers had never been, with all its beauty and grandeur, what this little cottage was to her already — a home.

“Come in, come in,” said Hob to his followers, and he rubbed his hands with delight, and took a flying leap over the settle as the Goblins entered.

And now Astra felt very glad indeed that among the other branches of her education she had studied cookery, for, tucking up her long train and turning up her sleeves so high that the dimple in her elbow showed plainly, she proceeded to make for the party, of the materials near at hand, the most delicious broth and tea-cakes, such as few mortals have rarely been so fortunate as to have eaten.

“Good! better! superb! excellent! magnificent!” said Hob, with his mouth full, and passing his plate for more, and all the Goblins gave a long low murmur of assent and approbation. And so the feast went on, till even the Elfin Prince could eat no more.

“Well,” said Hob rising, and speaking for the party, “all I can say is, that you have done remarkable work — remarkable! I speak from a goblin standpoint, which is, I may say, a very high



one. No one could do better. We thank you heartily and sincerely. For the present we leave you, but should you need our assistance, merely throw a pinch of salt into the fire, and call on Hob, Prince of Goblins, and never, madam, shall you call in vain," and making Astra a profound bow, he walked majestically away, the elfin horde following close at his heels, and soon the Princess found herself again alone.

Well, the weeks went by, and Astra was very happy, far happier than in the days when she had but to wish, to have her wants gratified, and when she had been waited on by inches. There was her cottage to keep neat and in order, her simple meals to prepare, her garden to water and tend daily, the birds with whom to make friends, long talks with Hob, pilgrimages to the forest, and sometimes tiny buttons as big as pins' heads to sew on, or rents a quarter of an inch long to mend for her goblin friends. Indeed, she was busy enough from morning till night, and to keep busy is often a very good way to keep happy. At least Astra found it so, but one morning something happened to change the even current of her life and give her thoughts new meaning. On rising she beheld over the back of a chair, instead of her usual gown, now somewhat worn by constant use, a magnificent costume of palest blue, heavily em-



broidered with pearls, with fan and ribbons and dainty shoes to match.

“How very strange!” thought the Princess, and looking closer she beheld a pencilled scrap of paper pinned to the gown, which said, —

“From Hob, Prince of Goblins, to Astra, greeting;” and underneath was written in a smaller hand, —

“To be worn immediately.”

“Well,” thought Astra, “they are very kind, but I’m afraid they don’t know much about the sort of dress one ought to wear to cook in. However, I think that I must just try it on,” and when she had done so, her mirror gave her back such a wonderfully beautiful picture that Astra, half-ashamed of her own loveliness, ran and covered herself all over with a great big white apron, that hung straight from her round white chin to her pretty little feet, and thus self-eclipsed, like a sun going under a big white cloud, she went downstairs to prepare her breakfast.

But she had hardly begun when a loud knocking sounded from without on the cottage door, and Astra’s heart began to beat fast. However, she remembered her powerful friends so near at hand, and that gave her courage, so going to the threshold she drew the latch. Instantly the door flew open, and there, to her astonishment, Astra



beheld the handsomest young man she had ever seen in her life. He, on his side, was equally astounded at beholding so lovely a vision, and so they both stared for some few moments with eyes big with wonder, and neither saying a word. At last Astra recovered herself and stepped aside.

“Will you not enter?” she said sweetly, and I can promise you the Prince, for he was a Prince, did not wait to be asked twice.

So he came in and sat down, and Astra sat down too, but she kept one eye on the kettle to see that it did not boil over.

“I have come from a long distance,” said the Prince, “for my kingdom lies west of the rising sun. My name is Ariel, and I was lost last evening in this forest, and at daybreak a wreath of smoke curling upward from your cottage showed me this place, and I thought I would venture to come and ask my way of whoever dwelt within; and,” he added, “I wonder if you know how glad I am to have done so?”

“Oh,” said Astra, and then she blushed, but the water in the kettle began to bubble at that moment, and that saved her answering. “But,” said she to herself, “he must be very hungry. I wonder if I might not invite him to breakfast?” and as she could think of no reason why she should



not do so, she asked him immediately if he would not share with her her simple fare.

“That I will,” said the Prince, and before she knew it, Astra found herself talking as freely to this stranger as though he were an old friend, while Ariel peeled the potatoes and she laid the cloth for the morning’s meal. Well, after breakfast, Ariel wiped the dishes while Astra washed them, and after that he worked in the garden, or would have worked there, had not Astra taken off her great white apron and sat demurely down to her spinning, and then I’m afraid the Prince did more gazing in her direction than anything else.

Well, the hours went by so pleasantly for them both, that when the clock in the cottage struck twelve, and Astra found it time for the mid-day meal, they were both very much astonished, and Ariel rose reluctantly and said that he must tear himself away. But he added that if the Princess did not object, he would like to return on the following morning, and Astra was kind enough to tell him very earnestly indeed that she did not object in the least.

So the Prince, having learned the way to the outskirts of the forest, bade her a farewell which, though it was for so short a season, took them both such a long time that when Astra’s dinner was ready it was very, very late indeed.



And now the days fairly took unto themselves wings, and flew away, no one knew how or whither, and Ariel found his way so many times to the cottage that there was a well-worn path through the wood where his feet had trod. It was wonderful the many things that they had to say to each other. If Ariel snared a rabbit, or shot with his bow and arrow some bird or other, it was, of course, to Astra that the game had to be brought at once; and when Astra discovered by accident that there were seven pink rosebuds, instead of five, on the bush in front of the cottage door, how she saved the good news to tell Ariel, and how wonderfully interesting it was, to be sure! Of course the matter had to be investigated, and it took a very long time indeed for them both to be quite satisfied that there were really seven roses instead of five as they had at first supposed.

And, since they told each other all these little things, it is not at all wonderful that they had also related many times the story of their lives, and Ariel vowed vengeance against the wicked King who had so maltreated his lady-love, while Astra shed many a silent tear over the sorrows of the Prince himself. For the Prince, it would seem, had for his enemy the powerful and wicked Cobrina, the Serpent Queen, and she it was who, having driven him from his home and king-



dom, was even now plotting to work his further ruin.

“You must know,” said the Prince, “that one day, when hunting in the forest of my father’s kingdom, I saw a hideous serpent which had fascinated a white dove. The poor little bird, impelled by a mysterious power, was drawing nearer and nearer to its horrible fate when I perceived it. Hastily throwing myself from my horse, I struck the serpent with my sword, cutting off his ugly head. In an instant all was confusion. The wood rang with a thousand voices, and from behind a gigantic oak tree stepped Queen Cobrina herself.”

“Oh!” said Astra, and she trembled all over.

“You should have seen her,” said Ariel, “for I cannot begin to tell you how hideous she is. Lithe and graceful, but with an ugly flat head; coarse, straight black hair; cruel eyes, as black as midnight, but long, narrow and unwinking, like those of a serpent; her skin dark like mahogany”—

“Dreadful!” said Astra. “Don’t please tell me any more. Only what did she do?”

“She was in a furious rage,” said the Prince, “for it seems I had that moment killed her chief councillor, who, having changed himself into a snake, had been amusing himself in his own fashion. At first wrath so choked her that she could



neither speak nor move, and I took advantage of the pause to spring again on my horse, and putting spurs to my steed, to fly from her sight. Only once did I look back, and then I went on faster than ever, for in her hand I beheld the serpent stone itself, and knowing its wonderful powers, I could hardly believe my own good fortune and escape. The rest you know, how Cobrina threatened my father's life did I not leave the kingdom, and how, after passing through many dangers, I at length reached this heavenly place — and you."

Ariel took Astra's hand in his and looked into her eyes, but the Princess blushed and said quickly, —

"Tell me the nature of the serpent stone of which you speak."

Now Ariel would much rather have talked of something else just then, but Astra's wishes, however slight, were law to him; so he answered and told her that in the serpent stone of which she questioned lay the chief part of Cobrina's power. It was set in a ring which she always wore, and by its means any one holding it in their possession could change either mortals or fairies into any form at will, or restore any one so changed to his natural shape again. The stone itself was a small, dull, green gem, that shone with a feeble



lustre, and it never left its place on the hand of the Serpent Queen for a single instant.

“That is why,” continued Ariel, “that she is so much to be dreaded. Hitherto I have escaped her because my hiding-place has been unknown, but she believes me to be her deadly enemy, and rightly, for I have made it my mission to capture and kill one whose power works solely for harm, and who is known far and wide for acts of wickedness and cruelty. And now, dearest Princess,” he went on, “you too have been the victim of injustice, and have suffered many things. May I not be your knight, and right, by means of my good sword, your wrong? Hitherto I have passed many a happy hour by your side; now it is time for me to go out again into the great world, and do a man’s part therein. If I return the victor, with your kingdom won again, and the Serpent Queen powerless for harm, will you not reward with your hand one who loves you so truly and so well?”

He sank on one knee before her, and Astra bowed her head and sat with downcast eyes, perhaps because she feared the light of joy in their depths would betray her.

“If I fall” — said the Prince, but Astra stood up:

“Fall! That can never be,” she said. “Rise, Ariel! My love protect and guide thee. Go, if



thou must, but remember that Astra watches and waits for thy coming, and let the thought save thee and nerve thee to deeds of strength."

And the Prince stooped and kissed the hem of her garment, and turning, went down the little path that led from the cottage; while Astra, with her soul in her eyes, stood watching, till presently the trees of the forest hid him from sight, and the Princess, with a little sigh, crossed the threshold of her home, and the first day of weary waiting had begun.

And now the weeks rolled on, and the summer season had ended. Snow fell thick and fast, and the thatched roof of the cottage was hung with glittering icicles. Hob came to see Astra often, and while he crouched shivering on the hearth, for he hated the cold, and warmed his tiny hands at the blaze, he told her many things of what went on in the great city beyond, for he was a sad gossip. And so it was that the Princess learned that all her old friends and teachers had been either beheaded or exiled, and how a reign of terror had succeeded her father's gentle rule. How terribly angry had been the King at her escape, and how, having searched vainly for her in every direction, the hunt had been at last abandoned. The Prince of the Goblins would chuckle gleefully to himself when he spoke of these things, and indeed, he was



never tired of relating how skilfully and well he had baffled the soldiers who had been sent out to find the hiding-place of the Princess, and bring her back in chains to the capital.

One day, however, Hob came in as usual, but Astra noticed that he was far from cheerful. His comical little mouth was drawn down at the corners, and the very feather in his cap had lost its natural jaunty air and hung disconsolately over his shoulder. Neither were the best efforts of the Princess to entertain or amuse him, in the least successful. The Prince of the Goblins only sighed heavily, and at last Astra saw a tiny tear, so small as to be almost invisible, creep slowly down the good little Goblin's face and fall to the floor. And now Astra became alarmed, and after close questioning she discovered the sad truth.

Ariel was in trouble. Hob had found it out accidentally from a brother gnome, and with wide-open eyes and parted lips Astra listened to the sorrowful tidings. The Prince had fallen into the hands of the wicked Cobrina, and had been changed by her into an eagle and carried away to the Serpent Queen's abode.

"I shall save him," said the Princess.

"Oh!" said Hob, and then he was silent, but only for a moment. Then such a volley of protest and argument came from his lips, that the



little man seemed to grow a full inch taller, and it was really wonderful to hear him.

Astra listened patiently, but she remained firm, and at last the Prince of the Goblins, completely worn out by the contest, gave in reluctantly to her view of the case, and having done so, immediately brightened up, and then threw himself into plans for help with as much eagerness as he had before opposed them.

“And first,” said he, “you must find out the direction of the palace of the Serpent Queen,” and rapping with his dagger hilt upon the floor, he summoned his followers and bade them look up all the old guide-books, and search carefully all the maps, and, after finding the place, to make a list of directions whereby the Princess might more easily find her way.

“Now that is done,” said Hob, “I want to give you some good advice. Cobrina is very wicked and very powerful, but she has one weakness, and that is vanity. When you find entrance into her palace, seek some means of seeing her alone, and tell her when you have done so, that you have a gift for her. This will be a looking-glass which I shall give you, and its peculiarity is that any one who looks in it beholds their own image indeed, but only a thousand times more beautiful than they could have ever dreamed.



“Oh! thank you, dear, kind Hob,” said Astra, her eyes sparkling. The little Prince sat up very erect.

“That is not all,” said he. “I have likewise a pair of wings that were once sent to my great-great-grandfather by the Queen of the Fairies, and these too I will give you. Perchance they will help you in your journey, or perchance in your escape,” and, turning to one of his subjects, he told him to find and bring back with him both this last gift and the magic looking-glass also. This being done, Hob presented them with a low bow to Astra, and after giving her the plainest directions for finding the castle of the Serpent Queen, he bade her farewell and good luck on her journeying, and said he, in parting, —

“Remember that Hob, Prince of Goblins, is ever your friend, and none will be so rejoiced as he to behold you safe at home and restored to your rightful throne;” and, kissing her hand in token of farewell, the little man flew out of the latticed window, closely followed by his retainers, and Astra, with one last look on the little cottage where she had passed so many happy hours, fastened the magic wings on her shoulders, and rising lightly in the air by their means, flew steadily along on the way marked out for her, in the direction of the palace of the Serpent Queen.



Meanwhile, we must go back to the Prince, who, changed by the enchanted stone into an eagle, pined all day long in the cage where he had been imprisoned by the wicked Cobrina, who came every morning to gloat over his misery.

Of all his powers, Ariel retained only that of speech, and at first he used to implore the Queen to kill him, and thus put an end to his unhappy state; but finding that this only amused his captor, the Prince relapsed into sullen silence, which neither the soft words nor the taunts of his jailer were able to break. All through the long, long hours when his cage was swinging from the topmost turret of the palace, the Prince thought of Astra; and the memory of her beautiful face, though it added to his sufferings, gave him new courage with which to bear his lot, and kept alive within him a lingering hope of escape.

The palace itself was situated in the centre of a vast desert on which no green thing grew. Loathsome serpents sunned themselves on the blackened rocks and burning sands of the place. Within the palace itself all was sombre, dark, and gloomy, and festoons of green, slimy weeds hung from the pillars of the room where Cobrina held her court and where she spent the greater part of her time, sometimes entering into long discussions about revenues and taxes with her Treasurer, an aged



Adder of no mean ability ; sometimes entertained by the graceful glidings and fantastic curvings of her famous Eel dancers ; at times soothed by the dull and monotonous but even conversation of her Lord Chancellor, a venerable Boa-Constrictor ; or again lulled to rest by the music of her court-musicians, a world-renowned band of Rattlesnakes.

But little did Ariel enjoy all this. He shuddered at the approach of even the tiniest serpent, and hated and loathed his prison more heartily day by day, the more so that release looked now so distant.

At last one morning when he was sadly pondering all these things, Cobrina appeared before him, and the Prince noticed that she was decked in all her most splendid robes, the serpent stone gleaming on her finger, and on her head the crown of golden snake-root which was the emblem of her power. But all this magnificence only served to make her look uglier and more repulsive than ever, and when she turned to Ariel with what was meant to be a most bewitching smile, the Prince felt himself grow faint and cold all over, so hideous did she appear.

“Ariel,” said the Serpent Queen, “I like you much, and I would fain restore you again to your proper shape. Not only that, but this, my hand,



I have also resolved to bestow upon you, and you shall reign with me and share my power, and my subjects shall feel and tremble at your frown, or bask in your smile, even unto the uttermost part of my dominions."

But the Prince, overcome with horror, was silent. Then Cobrina went on to assure him of her undying affection, but when, at last, the Prince threw off, by a violent effort, the spell that seemed to be weaving about him, and told the Serpent Queen that, under no circumstances whatsoever, would he ever be hers, Cobrina's rage was terrible indeed to behold. Finding her tongue at length, she showered all sorts of abuse upon him, and commanded her attendants to fling him into a loathsome dungeon, "until such time," said the Serpent Queen, "as you shall court the love and beg for the clemency, which, miserable wretch that you are, you have this moment refused."

Now Astra, while all these things were transpiring, had been steadily pressing nearer by unwearying though painful stages to her journey's end, and it so happened that, disguised as a serving-wench, she reached the castle of the Serpent Queen, just as Cobrina, livid with fury and disappointment, was descending the palace steps. Seeing a stranger within her gates, Cobrina, glad to have so easy a chance of wreaking her anger upon some one,



ordered the maid to be brought before her; and when Astra, with bowed head and downcast eyes, had been dragged by willing hands into Cobrina's presence, the Queen demanded harshly what might be her business at that place, and told Astra that unless her answer proved to be fully satisfactory to the royal mind, a dreadful and immediate punishment would be meted out to her for her presumption in thus intruding, uninvited, within the walls of the palace.

"May it please your Majesty," said the Princess, fearlessly, though still with downcast eyes, "I have heard that your Majesty needed a maid, and, having myself some experience in the tiring of royal ladies, I had hoped, perhaps vainly, to be admitted into your Majesty's service."

Now at this Cobrina smiled, for she was very proud of her own appearance, and the idea of having some one, however humble in station, to wait upon and admire her, was a new idea and a very pleasing one.

So she accepted the Princess's offer graciously, and saying that she would at once make a trial of Astra's ability as a maid, led the way to the royal apartments, the Princess following.

And now Astra's heart beat high with hope at finding herself under the same roof, and within the very same walls, as her much-loved Ariel, and



though the Serpent Queen filled her with disgust and repugnance, her great love made all things easy, and the most menial offices seemed as nothing, so long as they brought her nearer to the one object of her journeying. Patiently, therefore, she arrayed the coarse, black tresses of the hideous Serpent Queen, and in silence received the abuse lavished upon her. Nothing suited Cobrina, nothing was as it should be, but if she had been, if possible, ten times more trying, the Princess would have cheerfully borne it all, for there, on the Queen's right hand, Astra noticed the dull gleam of the serpent stone, and the sight had filled her with new and enduring courage. At last, however, the task was finished, and Astra, drawing the magic mirror from her girdle, requested the Queen to look and behold the result of her handiwork.

Cobrina glanced at the polished surface carelessly, but in an instant her face changed, and she clutched the enchanted glass close in her fingers, while a dull red flush came into her sallow cheeks.

"Wonderful! wonderful!" she said under her breath, for there, as Hob had foretold, the Serpent Queen beheld a strangely lovely image which, while bearing but a faint resemblance to her real self, seemed still to the Queen, to be her own true likeness. The minutes flew by, and still Cobrina



gazed fascinated into the magic mirror, but at last recollecting the presence of the Princess, she put down the glass with an effort, and said, turning carelessly to Astra, —

“You have done your work very well. We engage you to-day to wait upon our person. Go now and leave us. We will ring when we desire your presence,” and fingering the enchanted mirror impatiently she could hardly wait until the Princess had left the room, so much did she desire to see again the reflection of what she never doubted to be her own image.

“Now the Prince must love me,” thought Cobrina to herself, and still holding the looking-glass, for she could not bear to lay it down, if only for an instant, she went to her chests of perfumed sandal-wood, and drawing out piece after piece of rare embroideries, webs of lace, richly-wrought scarfs and gem-studded robes, began feverishly to try them on to see what became her most, and at each trial her admiration of her own beauty increased, and she murmured to herself that Ariel could not, in the nature of things, be long in falling victim to her many charms.

Meanwhile the Princess, released from duty for a few moments, lost no time in rapidly making the tour of the castle, and undeterred by the sight of the monsters and terrible serpents that at another



time would have caused her to faint in very terror, she ran quickly from room to room, peering into the darkest corners, lifting heavy draperies, shaking the tapestry with which the walls were covered, and even tapping with her fingers, the woodwork beneath as she passed, lest some hidden closet or secret chamber, which might perchance be Ariel's prison, should escape her eager search.

But before she had half finished her quest, she heard her name called, and forced to return to her hated duties, she found herself unable for the moment to pursue her search for the abiding-place of the unhappy Prince.

And now Ariel's lot was indeed a sad one, for Cobrina, convinced of her own loveliness, visited him daily, and beginning with affectionate words and greetings, would soon, on finding him obstinate and cold, shower upon him all sorts of ill treatment, which, in turn, being repented of, would be succeeded by a tenderness yet harder to bear.

Late one day, however, when musing sadly upon all these things, the Prince heard the notes of a song that the Princess used to sing to him when together they walked in the rose garden of the cottage, and for a moment his heart almost ceased beating, for some inward feeling told him that Astra was near at hand.



Soft and low came the music, —

“ Love, dear love, remember  
The past with its golden hours,  
And ne’er, dear heart, surrender  
The joy that has once been ours.

Smiles shine forth through tears, dear,  
As roses dipped in dew ;  
Dispel all idle fears, dear,  
My heart will e’er be true.”

The Prince listened attentively, and then in a low voice he sang the answering verse, —

“ Darling, all doubt like mist, dear,  
Thy presence sweet dispels,  
And lips that I have kissed, dear,  
Fidelity impels.

Believe me, sweet, thy lover, .  
Through sunshine and through rain,  
Defying Time’s endeavor,  
Remaining e’er the same.”

In an instant the door of his cell was thrown open, and Astra, with her finger to her lips, in token of silence, appeared. “Look,” she whispered, and raising her hand, Ariel beheld on her finger the serpent stone, and the next moment the Prince, restored to his natural shape by its means, was kneeling at her feet. Withdrawing hastily, she motioned him to follow.



“Cobrina is asleep,” said Astra, “but she may awake at any instant and discover her loss,” and indeed at that instant was heard overhead the sound of angry voices and hurrying feet.

“Fly!” cried Astra, beside herself with terror, and, hand in hand, they darted down the long corridor that now re-echoed with the sounds of fright and tumult about them. “Here,” said the Princess, “is a secret door;” and, touching a hidden spring, part of the solid wall slipped back, leaving an opening just large enough to pass through, and leading directly out upon the desert on which the palace stood. But hardly had they passed from shelter into the open when they were perceived by the Serpent Queen and her followers, and with a cry of rage, so terrible that it froze the blood in the Princess’s veins, Cobrina, mounted upon a winged dragon, started in pursuit.

On and on went the Prince and the Princess, flying in hot haste from the vengeance of the Serpent Queen. But alas! the shifting sands impeded their running feet, the sun blazed down mercilessly upon them, and at last Astra felt her strength giving way, and, sinking helpless upon her knees, she besought the Prince to leave her to her fate.

“Never!” said Ariel, “rather, far rather death with thee than life without thee!”

“The stone,” said Astra faintly, and the Prince,



with a cry of delight, seemed to see a way of escape opening before them; but, to his horror, the hand of the Princess was bare. The serpent stone had disappeared. In their mad flight the ring had slipped from Astra's finger, and now, indeed, all hope seemed over.

On came Cobrina; so near was she now that the fiery breath of her winged dragon smote their faces, and its gigantic body, poised above them, shut out like a dark cloud the sunlight.

"Take the magic wings," said Astra, hurriedly fastening them on Ariel's shoulders, "and fly! They will bear thee safe and well from danger. Go, beloved. Leave me, I beseech you!"

With a wicked cry of delight, Cobrina commanded her dragon to alight. Down it came. The Prince never stirred. Suddenly, he threw himself in front of the Princess to shield her, if only for a moment, from the rage of the cruel Queen.

"Die!" said Cobrina in a terrible voice, her eyes blazing with fury, her hand raised to strike; but at that instant a faint greenish flicker of light caught Ariel's eye, and there, caught in the meshes of Astra's girdle, hung the ring with its magic stone.

Cobrina saw it at the same instant, and stooped to snatch it from its hiding-place, but the Prince was



too quick for her. Seizing it in one hand, while with the other he supported the fainting Princess, he held the ring aloft and called in a loud voice, —

“Wicked monster, be changed to stone!”

In an instant, the features of the Serpent Queen, with their same fearful expression of rage and hatred, stiffened, her limbs grew heavy, and, in another moment, Cobrina sank, a hideous statue, upon the sands of the desert, and so dreadful to look upon was she, that Astra hid her face in her hands, and the wicked followers of the Serpent Queen turned in terror and confusion to fly in every direction.

“Saved!” said the Prince, and, lifting the Princess in his arms, he bore her from the spot, till at last the color began to come back to her beautiful face and she opened her eyes.

Then, hand in hand, they proceeded on their way, reaching the edge of the desert by nightfall, and, turning back for one last look, they saw in the distance, rising black and frowning, the palace of the Serpent Queen, who, frozen into stone, stood still with uplifted hand where they had left her, the last rays of the setting sun playing about her head, so that in the shifting light the crown of snakeroot seemed made of living serpents, while the lips, forever dumb, seemed to move in impotent malediction.



“Come!” said Astra shuddering, and in silence they resumed their journey.

But now, indeed, all was changed from sorrow into joy. The very heart of nature seemed awake. The brooks rippled with laughter, the birds sang love songs only; even the leaves on the trees of the forest through which they passed danced in the summer wind, and gradually the memory of their former misery passed gently away, and the very people whom they encountered on their homeward way turned back to catch another glimpse of the pair on whose forehead Happiness had so plainly set her seal.

On and on they went, till at length the scene began to grow familiar, and old landmarks met their gaze, and at last one evening they beheld before them the walls of the city that Astra knew to be her own, and here they paused.

“Let us enter boldly,” said the Prince, and clasping the magic ring to her heart, the Princess assented.

Hand in hand, therefore, they approached the city gate, and as they neared it, they heard a great commotion, as of many voices, and entering, beheld a vast throng of people, most of whom were armed, and some of whom carried banners on which, in letters of gold, Astra read, to her great astonishment, her own name.



Mingling in the crowd she learned that the Tyrant King had been deposed in her absence, and that this was a search party which had been organized, and which was about to set forth in the hope of finding their lost Princess and offering her the crown.

Wrapping her mantle therefore tightly about her, with bowed head Astra glided through the throng, the Prince following, and all unobserved in the general excitement, until at last she reached an open space in the very centre of the people, where stood a marble platform, from whence it had been the custom of the King, in former times, to address the people.

Slipping, still unnoticed, up the broad steps, she suddenly appeared in their midst, and, throwing back her veil, showed to the astonished multitude the very person for whom they had been about to seek.

Loud shouts of applause greeted her coming, and acclamations of delight and welcome.

“Long live our Princess! Long live Astra our rightful Queen!” they shouted, and when there was again silence, the Princess made them a little speech in which, after thanking them for their loyalty, she assured them of her protection, promised a free pardon to all, and then, taking Ariel by the hand, showed to the multitude their future King.



Instantly the shouts of welcome were redoubled, and, a chariot with four white horses appearing, the grateful people conducted the royal pair in state to their palace.

Here the wedding took place, and a more magnificent festivity had never before been seen. But when the speech-making and banqueting were over, and Astra was for the first time alone with her husband, she drew from her bosom the serpent stone, and casting it into the fire that blazed on the hearth, said to Ariel, —

“Thus do I throw away that for which I have no longer any need. For thy love is my protection, and with thee am I not afraid.”

And thus happily their troubles ended, and together they ruled the kingdom wisely, indeed, and well. Only when the cares of state pressed too heavily, Ariel and Astra would retire for a time to the little rose-covered cottage, rich with so many happy memories, and there Hob, Prince of Goblins, their tried and trusty friend, would often find them, by day to gossip and chat in a fashion all his own, as of yore, but in the evening to watch quietly and secretly from some hidden corner the twain who, with such happiness shining from their faces, walked up and down the garden path till the stars shone forth in the blue sky overhead and the lady moon came out from behind the clouds.







THE LAST OF THE DRYADS.















## THE LAST OF THE DRYADS.

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THERE was once a Dryad who was very beautiful, having hair the color of leaves turned golden by the frosts of autumn; eyes, now soft, now brilliant, as is the sunshine that falls through summer foliage; a skin white as the snow encumbering the tree branches in winter; and a heart as light as the topmost blossom that dances all day long, and is blown to and fro, now here, now there, by the baby zephyrs of the gentle spring.

The Dryad had but one sorrow, and that was the great loneliness of her lot. Companions, it is true, she had plenty, in the birds and animals of the forest, and in the flowers that blossomed on every side, but what she yearned for was a friend, a being with a human soul, to whom she might tell her troubles and confide her joys. Whenever this thought crossed the Dryad's mind, she sighed, for she knew that she was the last of her race, and it was little likely that such a being would be found mid the leafy depths of her woodland home to divine and still and satisfy her longings.



One day, however, when the Dryad was sadly thinking of all these things, she heard, not far away, a liquid sound of music, whose notes fell like dropping pearls upon the listening air. Cautiously the Dryad peeped forth from among the branches of the oak tree, where she lived, and there, seated on a grassy knoll, she saw a Shepherd who, all unconscious of her presence, sat piping on a flute of reeds which hung suspended from his neck by a blue ribbon.

Now this surprised the Dryad very much, for never in all her life before had she seen a man, but she thought the youth very handsome, and she felt all at once that the sap which ran in her veins instead of blood, was being strangely stirred, and though she did not remember ever having been frightened at anything before in her life, a strange timidity now closed her lips and kept her trembling and silent.

Suddenly, however, the youth looked up, and seeing the beautiful face smiling down upon him, and framed in the leaves of the oak tree, it was his turn to be very much astonished; but, perhaps because he had seen beautiful faces before, he was not in the least afraid, and began at once a conversation with this lovely stranger.

First he apologized for having disturbed her solitude with his music, and to this the Dryad re-



plied so graciously, that before either quite knew it, their talk flowed along so smoothly, and they had become such good friends, that the Shepherd asked her to take a little stroll with him in the wood, and the Dryad had assented. Laying her little white hand, therefore, in her companion's strong brown one, she swung herself down from her airy seat as daintily and as lightly as a dandelion puff blown by the wind, and the Shepherd saw that she was dressed all in green with a crown of oak leaves and acorns on her head; and so beautiful was she, with her golden hair falling about her like a mantle, and her glorious eyes like stars beaming upon him, that his very heart seemed melting within him, and, throwing himself at her feet, the Shepherd besought her to accept his love.

Now the Dryad was troubled and did not know quite what to say; but the youth, continuing to urge his suit, she at length told him to rise, and, seating herself beside him on a mossy tree-trunk, related to him her story.

“Know,” said she, “that I am a Dryad, and the last of all my race. Ever since I can remember, I have lived in yonder oak, tending it carefully, watching each tiny bud and leaflet, guarding them from the rude blasts of winter, and from the torrid heat of summer, protecting and cherishing always,



for as the tree lives, so live I, and when death overtakes it, I also must perish. When the sap begins to flow in the early spring, then flow new strength and vigor into my veins; all summer I laugh and sing, and am glad through all my being, but winter brings me rest and slumber." She turned blushing towards him. "Therefore, thou seest," said she shyly, "that I am not as other maidens."

"Fair lady," replied the Shepherd, "I care not. I know only that I love thee. Be thou mortal or Dryad, I am content. Tell me but how I may win thy heart and teach thee to leave thy forest dwelling place."

But at this the Dryad hung her head.

"Rash youth," said she, "thou knowest not what thou wouldst ask. Pan, god of the woodlands, is my master, and without his permission I may never depart from this spot. His home is far from here, and the way thick beset with dangers. Moreover, Pan himself loveth not mortals."

"I care not," interrupted the Shepherd valiantly. "Be only true to me, and then, come what will, I shall gain thy freedom." He knelt and kissed her hand.

"And now farewell, sweet Dryad," said he. "Remain by thine oak and wait my coming. I now set forth on my journey to Pan's dwelling-place;" and, despite the Dryad's prayers and



entreaties, with one last look the youth was gone.

For many moons the Shepherd travelled through hamlets and villages and over dusty highroads, eating and drinking where and when he could, but always keeping a light heart in his breast, and often beguiling the way by playing tuneful melodies upon his rustic pipe. After journeying, therefore, for a long time in this fashion, he at length beheld in the distance a great forest, in the very centre of which Pan held his court, and by nightfall reached it. Pushing bravely along through the thick underbrush he went, until suddenly a peal of elfin laughter smote his ear, and there, right before him in his path, he beheld two wood-creatures, all dressed in green, who, with spears and bulrushes, barred the way.

“Who art thou, and why comest thou hither?” demanded the first, taking off his high peaked hat, decorated with a single white owl’s feather, and bowing low in mockery to the stranger.

“I am a Shepherd,” answered the youth promptly, “and I come to claim an audience of Pan, your master.”

At this the two little woodmen shook all over with merriment, but, lowering their bulrushes, the other, who had not spoken, blew a loud blast on



the horn that hung by his side, and in another moment, in answer to the summons, a tall and beautiful forest nymph appeared, who beckoned to the Shepherd to follow her, and told him, in a musical voice, that sounded, however, like the wind that plays through reeds growing by the brookside, that she would conduct him to her master.

To this the Shepherd joyfully assented, and as they wound their way through the forest, the nymph, at first silent, at length turned to him and spoke.

“What may be the errand, fair youth,” asked she, “that brings thee so far and among so many dangers?” and the Shepherd, encouraged by her kind face and gentle smile, told her all about the Dryad and the whole story of his travels.

The nymph listened attentively, but when he had finished, her face was sad.

“I would that I might aid thee,” she said, “but I, alas, am powerless as thyself. Let me but tell thee one thing. If thou canst contrive to please my master, thou mayst ask what thou wilt, and he will give it thee, but if thou fail’st to charm him thou wilt not alone gain nothing, but thou shalt also be forced to remain forever a slave within this woodland. But look! Yonder he holds his court, and here, also, I must leave thee. But courage!



Press forward, and success now be thy guide ;” and, with a farewell wave of her hand, the nymph vanished, and the Shepherd, turning, saw before him, at some little distance off, a noisy group of satyrs, wood-creatures, half-man and half-goat, who, laughing and shouting, were dancing in a circle round a rustic throne that, raised a little from the ground, was set within their midst.

Advancing towards it came the youth ; but when he reached the place, and the satyrs had perceived him, they suddenly stopped their wild gambols, and became silent, regarding him curiously. Straight towards them, however, walked the Shepherd, and, as he approached, they drew aside to let him pass, and in a moment the youth found himself standing at the foot of the very throne of Pan himself.

From the waist down the god of the woodlands, like his subjects round him, was a goat, but the upper part of his body was that of a man, save that from his head grew two horns which were now ornamented with a garland of pine leaves. In his hand he held a pipe of reeds, and by his side rested a heavy knotted club, the sceptre and symbol of power.

Pan scowled at the bold stranger, and the satyrs crowded around ; but unmoved, with brave yet courteous bearing, the Shepherd waited.



“Who art thou, and what thy errand?” asked Pan at length in a harsh voice, and then the Shepherd, falling respectfully on one knee before the throne, told his story. He related how, while playing on his flute, he had looked up, and beheld, for the first time, the lovely Dryad, who, with her golden hair, and her beautiful eyes, and musical voice, had charmed him; and how, leaving his heart in her keeping, he had come even this weary way to Pan to relate all that had befallen him, and to beg for liberty and permission to leave her oak for the fair lady of his love and choice.

Silently Pan listened, and when the youth had quite finished he raised his head.

“Truly, thy tale is a strange one,” said he, “but stay; by thy side hangs yet the flute of which thou hast spoken. Put it to thy lips. Should the music pleasure me and these my followers, I will consider with favor thy request; but make but one false note with thy piping, and forever dost thou remain within these glades — a slave.” This speech was loudly applauded by the satyrs round about, who, as trembling the shepherd obeyed the wood-god’s command, gathered yet closer to listen.

And now the Shepherd thought of the lovely Dryad, whose fate hung trembling in the balance, and his soul was moved within him; and putting the flute to his mouth he played upon it as he had



never done before. Sweeter than dropping honey-comb came the music, now soft as the brook that through reeds and over silvery pebble babbles all day long, now clear as the song of the thrush or the nightingale, now sad as the summer wind that sighs mid the grasses, or lightly sweeps the strings of the æolian harp. Entranced and motionless the forest creatures listened, and when the last note had ceased, for a moment there was silence. The next, Pan, leaping down from his raised seat in their midst, took from his own head the garland of pine leaves that crowned it, and, placing it upon the brow of the Shepherd, hailed him as Prince among musicians.

“Well hast thou played, fair youth,” said he, “and I do now engage thee in my service; for a year and a day thou must remain within this wood and pipe at my bidding; but at the end of that time I will give thee wealth such as thou hast not dreamed, and back shalt thou go to thy Dryad, whom I from this moment do, at thy request, declare free. In the mean time rest faithful and contented.”

Saying which Pan arose, and, followed by the whole horde of satyrs and wood-men, left the place, and the Shepherd found himself alone.

Meanwhile, the Dryad, left in solitude, watched and longed for her lover's coming; but as the days



went by without any sign from him, her heart grew sorrowful, and her eyes heavy with weeping. At length, however, one morning as she was coming from her oak for a little stroll in the forest, she beheld, through the foliage of some bushes near at hand, an ugly monster, half man and half goat, that was crouched there watching her. At first the sap in her veins almost froze with terror, but soon the thought struck her that this wood-creature, however hideous, must be one of Pan's subjects, and so might perhaps be able to tell her something of her lost Shepherd. Advancing, therefore, towards him, she requested him to come forth, and, in a trembling voice, described to him the Shepherd, and besought him to tell her if he knew aught of such a person.

With an ugly smile that was meant to be fascinating, the satyr obeyed, and, approaching, he told the Dryad that he had indeed seen such a youth, and had even been present when the stranger had been brought before Pan himself.

"Then, good, kind creature, tell me, I beseech thee," said the Dryad, "how fared he, and why doth he not return?"

"Alas!" said the satyr, assuming an air of grief, "thou shalt never see him more, for Pan, angry at his intrusion into the forest, hath made him forever a slave."



On hearing these cruel words the poor Dryad uttered a cry so pitiful that the very rocks about were moved, and she turned so white that the very birds would fain have helped her in her distress. Only the hideous satyr remained untroubled by her sorrow, for he had made up his mind to win the Dryad for himself, and even, if necessary, to carry her off by force to his own home within the depths of the wood-god's forest.

He wished, however, to try fair means first, so with gentle words he endeavored to soothe the Dryad till she was forced to beg him to leave her, and, overcome with grief, retired to her oak-tree. Nevertheless, from that day forth, the satyr ceased not his persecutions and his visits till the poor Dryad knew not which way to turn.

Faithful still to her Shepherd, though she believed him forever lost, she would listen to no word of love from the monster that persecuted her. Indeed the ugly satyr inspired her only with horror and aversion; but, undeterred by her words of scorn, he still sought her daily, and, with renewed entreaties, mingled now with threats, made her still more and more unhappy and distressed.

A year and a day passed in this manner, and at length the satyr, fearing the Shepherd's return, and maddened by the Dryad's cold disdain, decided to bear her away by force.



The Shepherd, meanwhile, remained helpless within the forest and in the service of Pan. Every night he piped for the wild creatures who danced and gambolled and capered uncouthly around him ; by day he was free to follow his own fancies, and this time he spent in wandering about the forest, and seeking its boundaries and some way of escape, but always in vain.

But though the hours sped slowly, pass nevertheless they did, and at length the day of freedom dawned ; and, after a final audience with Pan, who presented him with a bag filled to the brim with precious stones, and a moss-green cloak of some wonderful texture and more beautiful than the Shepherd had ever seen, he at last was allowed to depart, and, laden with treasure, started joyfully homeward.

Weary and worn with travel, he at length reached the forest, the dwelling-place of his beautiful Dryad ; and hurriedly pressing through the underbrush and shrubbery he came, his heart bounding high with hope, and soon perceived through the trees the grassy knoll and the sturdy oak that formed the Dryad's home. Quickening his steps he plunged onward ; but hardly had he done so when a faint cry smote upon his ear, and, tearing aside the intervening foliage, he beheld a sight that for the moment deprived him of both speech and



motion, for there, beneath his very eyes, he saw his beloved Dryad, struggling in the grasp of a hideous satyr, that with brutal violence was dragging her away.

For an instant only did the Shepherd stand in horror-struck silence; the next he had leaped across the open space and had seized the monster by the throat.

And then, in the very centre of the peaceful greenwood, a fearful struggle took place between the Shepherd, strong in his defence of the lady he loved, and the satyr, powerful with baffled rage, while the Dryad stood trembling and wringing her hands.

This way and that they swayed, and the grass lay trampled beneath their feet, and the tender green leaves about them fell torn and dying, till at length, with a mighty effort, the satyr wrenched himself free, and, drawing the woodman's axe that hung from his girdle, smote the Dryad's oak-tree a fearful blow, and with a horrible laugh of triumph turned to fly. But in vain, for hardly had he done so, when the Shepherd rushed forward, and the next moment the ugly satyr lay prone and lifeless upon the ground. But alas! the victory came too late, for when the Shepherd turned from his fallen enemy to clasp the Dryad in his arms, he found her leaning white and motionless against the trunk



of the smitten tree. And then, suddenly, the truth flashed upon him : the satyr's last revengeful blow, whose deadly aim had reached the oak-tree's heart, was as fatal to the Dryad as if, instead, a knife had pierced her own. For now he remembered her words : —

“As the tree lives, so live I, and when it dies, I also must perish.”

Every tiny rivulet of sap, therefore, that trickled down the knotted trunk of the once sturdy oak, was draining away the precious life fluid from the Dryad's veins. The tree had received its death-blow, and so, unhappy fate ! had she.

With a cry of anguish the Shepherd knelt beside her, and as she lay mute and passive within his arms, her beautiful head pillowed upon his breast and her golden hair falling like a veil about him, his very heart seemed breaking.

Was this then to be the end of all his love and labor ? But no ! Surely some kind spirit would help him, and even as the thought crossed his mind, he saw poised lightly above him, on a willow-bough, a tiny fairy, not much bigger than a dragon-fly, that glittered and gleamed in the noonday sun and regarded him curiously from his airy perch.

“I behold thy trouble and pity thee,” said the fay, in a voice so small that the summer zephyr almost carried the words away. “I was watching



whilst thou fought with the monster, and I saw that thou didst well and bravely. 'Twas a foul blow that smote thy Dryad. Tell me, wouldst have me guide thee to our Queen? Perchance, were she so minded, she might aid thee."

"Oh, most willingly," cried the Shepherd; but just then his eyes rested on the Dryad, and he hung his head.

"How can I leave her?" he said.

"Easily," answered the fairy cheerily. "Have courage, I will arrange all," and spreading two wings of azure and opal the little creature flew downward, and with his tiny finger drew a circle round the place.

"Come," said he, "in thine absence none can enter within this magic ring," and, stooping, he breathed upon the Dryad's face, "neither shall she awaken till thy return. Fear not, she rests safe and well. It remains now with thee to so please our Queen that she grant thee thy request. If that may be I know not. But at least I will guide thee to her presence, for thou art a valiant youth, and I like thee much."

So saying, with an air of great importance, the fairy again spread his wings, and beckoning to the youth, darted away through the leaves; and with one last look upon the face of her whom he loved, the Shepherd followed.



On and on they went, through the forest that grew thicker and thicker as they advanced, till at length they reached a massive stone, that, curiously carven with mystic signs and figures, blocked the way.

On this the tiny fairy rapped three times, when, to the Shepherd's great astonishment, the rock slowly sank, leaving exposed to view a long flight of steps that descended until lost to sight amid the dark recesses of the earth.

Down this underground way the fairy flitted, and the Shepherd bravely followed. Deeper and deeper, — until, all at once, with a sudden turn, the journey ended, and a flood of sunshine showed them to be on solid earth again, while before them rose a barred gate of purest gold. This, too, opening to the fairy's summons, the Shepherd entered and beheld himself in fairyland.

On either side of the path where they now walked, tall white lilies waved to and fro in the fragrance-laden breeze, cool fountains splashed musically in silver basins, and the smooth green turf was dotted thick with diamond drops of dew.

Little fairies, some riding swiftly hither and thither on gorgeous butterflies, while some cushioned in the hearts of roses, and some swinging from vine-leaves, met the eye on every side; but the Shepherd and his tiny guide went steadily



onward until they came to a turn in the road, where the fairy, motioning the Shepherd to await him, flew straight to a bower covered with columbine, and, taking a little horn from his side, blew a shrill blast.

Immediately a door of mother-of-pearl, hidden before by the flowers about, opened, and a fairy, much larger than those the Shepherd had yet seen, appeared.

She was dressed all in palest lilac, shot with violet, and her wings were tipped with silver. In her hair shone a diamond star, and she smiled kindly upon the little sprite before her.

“So art returned, Golightly,” said she; and then perceiving the Shepherd, “but whom have we here?”

“This, your Grace,” answered the little fairy promptly, and making a profound bow, “is a mortal whom I found in dire distress because a satyr had smitten the oak where dwelt a Dryad whom he loved, thus wounding her, I fear me, fatally. When I beheld him thus overcome with sorrow, I could not forbear to offer him my guidance to fairyland, that he might lay his case before our Queen and obtain, perchance, her powerful assistance.”

But at this the fairy's face clouded.

“I fear,” said she, “that thou comest on a fruit-



less errand, for the Queen, our mistress, is, I can promise thee, in no gentle mood to-day. This evening, as thou must know, the King of the Gnomes is coming to pay a visit to our court. When the news arrived, I was doing the Queen's hair after the most approved manner, and following the latest fashion-plate; but from that moment nothing seemed to suit Her Majesty. She called me awkward, threatened to dismiss me, who have served her for years as Head Waiting Maid, banished the Royal Vinaigrette Holder, threw the crown jewels in the very face of the Prime Minister himself, and at length ordered all the Ladies of the Wardrobe to display for her selection every one of the royal dresses.

"And then, my dear Golightly, if you will believe it, not one of these would do, and finally a gown had to be ordered, and only three hours to cut and fit and finish it. However, it was done, and most fortunately, it pleased Her Majesty, and we all breathed freely, when all at once the Queen, who had been admiring herself in the mirror, threw down the glass.

" 'Where is the cloak to go with this costume?' she asked. 'I receive the King of the Gnomes at the entrance of my dominions, as you all know. Where, then, is the mantle that I should wear?'

"You can imagine the fright we were all in.



A herald was sent as fast as possible to all the cloakmakers of fairyland, but when he returned, things were worse than ever. A beautiful garment of peacocks' feathers, a sweet thing in yellow butterflies' wings, and the dearest mantle of rose-colored ostrich plumes, were alike thrown aside by Her Majesty, and when, at last, a simply lovely cloak of silken tissue wrought with seed-pearls was brought for the royal inspection, Her Majesty wouldn't even look at it. So there the matter rests. The Queen is so angry; but no one knows what to do next, and so you see, Golightly, it would be worse than useless to try to obtain an audience now."

"That is true," said the little fairy, and he hung his head; but the face of the Shepherd, who had been listening intently, suddenly brightened, and, hastily drawing from his shoulders the mantle that Pan had given him, he held it out for the Head Waiting Maid's inspection. The soft green folds shimmered and shone in the sunlight, and the golden dragons with emerald eyes that formed the clasp seemed almost alive, so true was the carving; the embroidery, curiously wrought in gold thread, was set thick with jewels, and the lining of humming-birds' breasts glinted and gleamed with a thousand hues.

"Beautiful!" said the two fairies in one breath;



and then the Queen's Waiting Maid touched it gently with her finger.

"There is nothing like it in all fairyland," she said. "How was it that I did not at first observe it? And how gracefully it will hang from Her Majesty's shoulders over her gown of silver tissue. Come at once, we will seek the royal presence," and spreading her wings, she flew straight before them, the Shepherd and his fairy guide following.

Before them stretched a beautiful lawn of velvet turf, but having traversed this, and having passed some outlying trees, the Shepherd found himself in a garden, the like of which he had never seen. In the distance gleamed a canopy of a tent of white satin, fastened to the ground by golden stakes, and this, the Queen's Waiting Maid told him, was the royal pavilion itself.

Going a few steps further, they were met by twelve men-at-arms, in crimson and white, who, with shining lances, barred the way. At a sign from the fairy, however, these drew aside, saluting as they did so, and making a path through which the Shepherd, his friend the tiny sprite, and the Lady in Waiting were allowed to pass. A little further, and a body of the Queen's archers in green and gold blocked the way; but these also, recognizing the Lady in Waiting, fell respectfully



aside. They were now within a few minutes' walk of Her Majesty's tent, at the entrance of which, having passed the royal body-guard habited in orange and black, and having been pelted with acorns by a band of mischievous pages, they now paused.

Pushing aside the hanging curtain, the Lady in Waiting entered, and the Shepherd found himself, Pan's cloak upon his arm, in the very presence of the Queen of all the Fairies.

Reclining on silken pillows of rose-leaf hue, Her Majesty lay, and so beautiful was she, that the Shepherd stood entranced and motionless. A fillet of diamonds bound her nut-brown hair, and she wore a robe of silver tissue that seemed woven with moonbeams; about her waist was a jewelled girdle, and the strap of the one tiny sandal that showed, was sewn thick with the same precious gems that gleamed from the royal brow.

Two fan-bearers stood at either side, and a slave crouched near at hand with the royal vinaigrette. As the curtain that shielded the entrance of the Queen's tent fell back into place, Her Majesty looked up languidly, and, raising her lorgnette, surveyed the little group, but her glance rested longer upon the Shepherd than upon the other two.

"Ah, Lilaca," said she, indicating the stranger



with a wave of her little hand, "who is this person?"

"He is one who ventures to bear your Majesty a slight token of his faith and allegiance," said the Shepherd, answering for himself; and advancing, he knelt before the throne, and displayed the mantle which he held. Immediately on beholding it, the Queen's face changed.

"Wonderful!" cried she, clapping her hands. "The very thing! Quick! a pier-glass, that I may see the effect!" and, throwing the mantle about her shoulders, she surveyed the image pictured there in silent contentment for some time. Then she spoke:—

"There is no doubt about it," she said decidedly, "it is a beautiful mantle, and *very* becoming."

"Yes, indeed, your Majesty. Your Majesty speaks truly!" cried all the courtiers in a breath.

"Lilaca," said the Queen graciously, "you have done well. You are not nearly so stupid as I had thought. Receive my royal forgiveness; you shall have all my cast-off dresses;" and then, turning, "But who is this little fairy?"

"May it please you," answered the sprite, in a very small voice, "I am Golightly, and I found the Shepherd."

"Indeed!" said the Queen. "Then, Golightly,



you shall be knighted," and calling for her wand, she extended it above the little fairy's head.

"Grow to a suitable size," said she, and when he had shot up several feet, she tapped him lightly on the shoulder.

"Rise, Lord Golightly," continued Her Majesty. "We appoint you, in testimony of our affection and in reward for your good conduct, First Knight of the Garter and Perpetual Keeper of the Royal Shoe Buckle;" and while, overcome with joy, the new-made lord murmured his thanks, the Queen turned towards the Shepherd.

"And now, fair youth, what may we do in thy behalf?" she asked, and in reply the Shepherd told her all his story and proffered his request.

When he had quite finished, the Fairy Queen unclasped her girdle from her waist.

"Take this," said she, "and bind it round your Dryad's oak. It will at once restore it and her to perfect health and strength;" and, calling to her secretary, she continued, "Make out a free pass for this stranger and his bride, admitting them without charge to all the haunts of fairyland;" which being immediately done, Her Majesty handed the document with royal grace to the Shepherd, together with a tiny book written on vellum, whereon were the royal arms, and inscribed in letters of gold the words, "A Short Road to a



Happy Marriage.” “A trifle of my own composing,” said the Queen, and bidding the youth farewell and good-speed on his journey, Her Majesty signified that the audience was at an end.

Happily bearing his gifts therefore, the Shepherd departed, and, taking leave of his kind friends at the gate of fairyland, it was not long before he found himself within the forest, and not far from the Dryad’s oak, which he reached just at eventide. There lay the Dryad wrapped in slumber as he had left her. Falling upon one knee, the Shepherd gazed earnestly into her face so calm, so beautiful, in the gathering twilight. Then, rising, he clasped the Queen’s girdle round the trunk of the dying tree which in a moment seemed to gain new life. And as he did so, the Dryad awoke and looking up beheld him; and as, hand clasped in hand, they stood in the very heart of the great forest, out from behind the clouds came the sun and cast a golden glory about them, while a little brown bird, hidden mid the branches overhead, sang sweetly to his mate.



THE STORY OF KLANIVING, THE  
WOOD DEMON.















## THE STORY OF KLANIVING, THE WOOD DEMON.

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ONCE upon a time there lived in a tiny tumble-down cottage on the outskirts of a great forest, a poor old woman and her little daughter Marietta, the pride and darling of her mother's heart.

They had lived there quite by themselves for years and years, for the village where they bought their simple food was more than a league distant, and few were the strangers who found their way to that lonely spot. Indeed it was said by some people that the forest was enchanted, and by others that a frightful dwarf dwelt there, ready and eager to do harm to any one who should be so foolish as to pass within his reach; but Marietta only shook her golden curls when these things were told her, and as for Marietta's mother, she was far too busy to heed or notice such idle talking.

Well, the weeks went by, and one day there was a great commotion in the village. Marietta had been sent there by her mother to procure some



flax for the spinning, which in the little cottage seemed to go on from morning till night, and this was how she happened to hear that the Prince of the Diamond Isles was to pass through the place and even to stop one night there, on his way to the yearly tournament. And now, indeed, there was the wildest excitement, and with one accord the good people of the village trooped in a body to the house of the Oldest Citizen, who for a hundred years and over had been wont to tell them what to do on all occasions of importance and public interest. Marietta followed the crowd, for it was a sight well worth remembering when the Oldest Citizen could be persuaded to appear and address the townsfolk in his long purple mantle trimmed with finest wool, and his beautiful silver beard that nearly touched the ground. So she pattered along right joyfully on her little brown feet, her golden curls glancing and gleaming here and there through the crowd like an animated sunbeam, her violet eyes big with wonder, and the smile on her rosy parted lips winning kind words and gentle greetings from all near by.

On and on they went, down one narrow crooked street, up another, past the town pump brave in a coat of fresh green paint, over by the little moss-grown church by the town hall, where the brass bell in the steeple was clanging, up a lane hedged



in with box, through the principal square, and on to the house of the Oldest Citizen. There they stopped, and the Mayor coming forth knocked loudly three times amid the most profound silence, on the door of the cottage. Marietta stood up on tip-toe and looked with all her eyes, and presently there was a rustle and a murmur from those in front, and then from those further away, and then in a parting of the crowd Marietta caught a glimpse of the Oldest Citizen seated on the oaken chair of state and listening in turn to the chief men of the village. Indeed, every one was so quiet after the first movement of welcome, that she could easily catch what they were talking about, and so she listened as hard as ever she could.

“It is quite true,” the Mayor was saying, “in fact, there is no doubt about it whatever, the Prince of the Diamond Isles is really coming, and I may say in my official capacity, in my present position as Mayor of this village, that I consider the occasion to be a very important one indeed;” he coughed slightly, and all the people cheered, but the Oldest Citizen said nothing. He was so very old, you see, that he could find time to say only the most necessary things, and ordinary conversation was never expected of him. But as everything he said was always written down in the public records, that he should refrain from common



speech was, perhaps, quite as well. Now he only looked fixedly at the Town Clerk as a signal that his turn had come.

The Town Clerk was very tall and thin and nervous, and he was very much afraid of the Mayor also, so he only stammered that what his Honor had so excellently said was quite true, that his Honor had put the case so clearly, that in fact —

“The point is just this,” broke in the Mayor impatiently, whereat the Town Clerk looked much relieved. “The Prince of the Diamond Isles is to be here to-morrow; now what shall we do to entertain him?” and he looked hard at the Oldest Citizen.

The Oldest Citizen bowed his head, considered for a few moments, and then he sat upright and looked straight before him.

“How old is the Prince?” he asked, and the Town Clerk wrote the question down in his book, and blotted it and then wrote it down again.

“His Royal Highness is in his fifteenth year,” said the Mayor.

“Bring Marietta,” said the Oldest Citizen, and this surprised the Town Clerk so much that he forgot to write down anything at all. As for Marietta, she could hardly believe her ears, but the people about her began to push her gently forward, and in a few moments she found herself blushing.



and trembling in the open space before the chair of the Oldest Citizen. But though she was very much surprised and a little frightened, she did not forget her manners, but dropped a very pretty little courtesy, and then remained waiting.

There was perfect silence, and all the people stared; but the Oldest Citizen smiled upon her kindly, and, pointing straight before him to where she stood, said very slowly and clearly, —

“Marietta will entertain the Prince.”

At this there was the greatest excitement. The Town Clerk dropped the public records and very nearly forgot to pick them up again; every one began to talk at once; the Mayor even ventured to remonstrate a little, but the Oldest Citizen, rising, signified that the interview was at an end, and the council had of course to break up.

And now Marietta, in her simple cotton frock, became the centre of a turbulent crowd, all wondering and questioning and nobody answering. The Mayor looked sternly at her, for he thought if a child was to have been chosen to entertain the Prince, it ought to have been his own daughter, and now he gave so many directions as to how Marietta should behave, and what she should do, that the little girl was quite bewildered and did not know whether to laugh or cry.

One thing only she remembered, and that was



that she should come to the village early on the following day, there to receive further directions and there to be properly attired for a meeting with the Prince.

The sun was blazing overhead, but Marietta ran all the way home to tell the surprising news to her mother; and she leaped over the threshold of the cottage hot and tired, but eager to relate the wonderful story; and not so very long either after she had left the village.

She found her mother spinning, just as she had been when she had left her in the morning, and, without pausing for breath, she began at once to say how the Oldest Citizen himself had called her out from among all the people, and had appointed her to entertain the boy Prince of the Diamond Isles. Her mother smiled, but hardly had Marietta finished her story, when from the depths of the forest came a peculiar cry, sweet and musical, but like a wail of sorrow, "*Ah mio alma perdida!*" The mother shivered and grew pale and drew her little daughter nearer, and even Marietta trembled, though she knew not why.

"What was that sound, mother?" she asked in a frightened whisper, "and what did it say?"

"That is only the cry of *el alma perdida*, the Lost Soul," said her mother, trying to smile; "it is a bird of the forest. The villagers say that its



plaintive note is the lament of some poor child that, lost among the trees, becomes the prey of Klaniving, the Wood Demon, and, changed to a bird, calls forevermore, '*Ah mio alma perdida,*' 'Ah, my poor lost soul.'" Again the sad cry echoed through the cottage, and the mother rose hastily and shut the door.

"Tell me further of the Prince, little daughter," she said, "and let us think no more of such foolish tales; only promise me not to stray in the forest to-morrow, for I shall not be with you to watch over you, as I would wish to do, and I would gladly have your word to remain near at home."

Marietta promised, and, seeing her mother calm again, forgot all about the matter, and crept into her little bed that night to dream many wonderful things of to-morrow and of the Prince, but with not one passing thought of Klaniving or the pretty bird whose note sounded ever and again from without the rose-covered lattice of her chamber window.

The next day dawned clear and fine, and Marietta, after taking her simple breakfast of porridge and milk, started straight for the village, for the Prince was expected at noontime, and there was much to be done before his arrival. Reaching the principal square, she found it thronged with people, and the town-crier, recognizing her at once,



brought her with great ceremony to the Mayor's wife. Here she was practised in making court courtesies, and in saying, with just the right amount of respect, "Yes, your Highness, and "No, your Highness," and "May it please your royal will to do this and that and the other." Here she was told that the honor of the village depended quite on her, and that, after the opening ceremony of welcome, she and the Prince of the Diamond Isles were to be left quite alone. Marietta paid great attention to all these instructions, and made up her mind to follow them exactly, and after some time she was brought into another room, and here she was dressed in the most beautiful clothes. Her frock was all of cloth of silver with a wide sash of pale blue, like a piece of the sky, Marietta thought to herself. On her head was a wreath of white roses, and she carried a large bunch of these same flowers to offer to the Prince. On her feet were silver shoes laced with blue ribbon, and though they felt very uncomfortable to Marietta's unaccustomed feet, they certainly looked very splendid, and that was more than enough to make up for the pain. Then the directions were repeated all over again, and by that time the bell of the town hall began to ring, and Marietta's heart beat high, for that meant that the hour had struck for the Prince's coming. Then the Mayor, taking Mari-



etta by the hand, led her forth; but she did not have much time to think, for the Mayor walked very fast, and took such great steps that it was all she could do to keep up by his side. Soon, however, they reached the place where the villagers were assembled dressed in their best, and the town band, which had three pieces, a Jew's-harp, a trumpet, and a flute, began to tune up and play "Hail to the Chief" as best it might. And then Marietta saw in the distance a tiny cloud of dust; it grew larger, and now the galloping of horses' hoofs might be heard, nearer and nearer, till the forward guard of the Prince's party burst into sight, and the townspeople, throwing themselves on their faces, called aloud, "Welcome to our Prince!" "Welcome to His Highness, Heir to the Diamond Isles!" Only Marietta stood alone, and that was because she was too excited to remember her lesson in court etiquette, for there, right in front of her, doffing his hat and reining up his milk-white steed, was the Prince, and a right merry companion he looked with his nut-brown love-locks floating in the wind, and his dark eyes sparkling with fun and good humor. Marietta almost forgot the splendor of his suit of Lincoln-green, pinked out with gold, in looking at them, and, worst of all, she entirely forgot her speech.

"How do you do?" she said shyly, and then she



reached up and handed him a rose from the bunch that she held in her hand. The Mayor shivered, and all the soldiers smiled, and some of the people looked at one another in shocked silence, but the Prince did none of these things. Taking the rose he kissed it, and putting it in his belt, he lightly swung himself down from the saddle.

"I am very glad to see you," he said; "and will you tell me your name?"

"I am Marietta," said the little girl, laughing to think that any one should have to ask so plain a question.

"That is the prettiest name in the world," said the Prince, and then he turned to his followers.

"I would be alone with Marietta," he said.

But at this the Mayor could no longer contain himself.

"May it please your Royal Highness," he cried boldly enough, though his knees trembled beneath him, "we have prepared sixty-seven speeches of welcome; there are two poems of one hundred stanzas each, yet to be recited in your honor, all by the poets within the village. The best talent has been engaged."

"Enough," said the Prince. "I thank you, but I must beg to decline your kindness. Farewell, good people, for the present."

He sprang again into the saddle, and, stooping,



whispered a few words into Marietta's ear; giving her his hand, in a moment she found herself seated before him, and ere the Mayor could utter another word, or the people join in a single cheer, the milk-white charger of the noble Prince had borne the twain quite out of sight. On and on they went, the fresh air blowing cool upon Marietta's burning cheeks, and the golden sunshine falling like a glory upon them; on and on till they came to the border of the forest, and the Prince, dismounting, helped Marietta to alight.

"That was splendid!" he said, out of breath, but laughing, and Marietta clapped her hands and laughed too. "And now we can have the whole day together with no tiresome speeches," he went on, "and I will tell you what we will do; you shall be my lady. You know that knights always choose a lady for their own; they wear her colors, and do battle in her honor, and make every one honor and respect her. Now, I have been looking for you, just you, without knowing it, for a long, long time, and when I saw you standing there with those white roses on your head and in your hand, I made up my mind that if you would have me, I would be your knight. May I be your knight? You see now I can go to the tournament and do battle in your name. I will wear a white rose in my helmet, and if I win the



crown of beauty, I can give it to you when I come back."

"That would be lovely," said Marietta, and her eyes sparkled.

"And if you are my lady," went on the Prince, "I shall have to kill dragons and fight with giants, and you must send me on long and dangerous journeys."

"Oh," said Marietta, and her eyes grew misty at the very thought, "I *couldn't* do that, you know. Why, you might get hurt."

"Pooh!" said the Prince, "I wouldn't care if it was for your sake, and besides I should come home again after a while, and there would be a great feast, and you would marry me. You would marry me, wouldn't you?"

"Oh, yes," said Marietta, and then she blushed a little. "I think you are the nicest boy — no, I mean Prince — that I ever saw," she said.

"Then that's all settled," said the Prince, and he sighed contentedly, and then he looked at the forest. "I say, what a splendid place to play hide and seek," he cried, jumping up, and just then he caught sight of a beautiful bird that fluttered almost within his reach. "Look, look!" he called to Marietta, seizing her arm and pointing upwards, "isn't he a beauty? Do you suppose we could catch him? Oh, how I wish that I had my bow and arrow!"



The bird flew temptingly nearer, and Marietta's heart beat fast with excitement, her eyes followed its movements; it had scarlet feathers tipped with gold; its breast was a beautiful blue, that changed to green and a thousand colors, like a peacock's tail, in the wavering light that came between the trees; the beak and talons were burnished and black like ebony. The children drew a long breath; the bird floated a little further away.

"Come," said the Prince, and they both started in pursuit.

Sometimes it would fly almost within reach, and then it would flutter away almost out of sight, but always coming back again. The trees were growing thicker and thicker; soon they came to a place in the forest where two narrow paths went in opposite directions; the bird flew on straight overhead.

"You go this way," said the Prince, "and I will go the other, and we will meet later on and tell what luck we have had."

In an instant he was out of sight, and Marietta, not wishing to be left behind, pushed further and further into the forest. She ran on for a long time, but now progress was becoming every moment more difficult. The scarlet plumage of the beautiful bird still gleamed here and there through the branches, but Marietta did not care so much now about catching the feathered songster. It was



very, very lonely with the great trees all around, stretching their tall branches up to a sky which Marietta could now hardly see.

She began to call loudly for the Prince, but there was no reply, and now, indeed, her little heart beat fast with fear and sorrow. "Why, O why, had she come into this hateful forest?" and then, for the first time, she remembered her promise to her mother. Two big tears slowly formed in Marietta's eyes and fell down her rosy cheeks; her beautiful silver dress was soiled with mud and torn with brambles, and one silver slipper had fallen off and was lost in the mad chase.

Marietta sat down on a rock and began to cry in good earnest. Suddenly there was a rustle amid the branches overhead. She looked up. There sat the scarlet bird, the cause of all her misery. It was gazing at her intently, as if enjoying her anguish, and Marietta began to tremble, though she knew not why. Suddenly the bird seemed to grow larger. It came nearer and nearer. Marietta looked on in terrified wonder.

Suddenly she sprang to her feet; it was not a bird at all now, it was a little misshapen man, dressed all in red, with one great eye blazing in the very centre of his forehead. The feathered plumage that he had worn lay on the ground at one side. He looked at Marietta, and she lost all



power to move. Coming nearer and nearer, he suddenly threw a few grains of powder in her face and muttered some magical words under his breath. Marietta grew all at once very light. The little man was laughing horribly.

In a moment she knew that he was Klaniving, the Wood Demon, and she tried to call out, but what was it she was saying? "*Ah mio alma perdida!*" Oh, my lost soul! It was the very cry that she had heard the other night in the cottage. She looked down, and then she knew the truth. Her silver dress had vanished, so had her golden curls and her violet eyes; there was nothing left at all of little Marietta; she was a bird now, changed like many another lost child into that form by the wicked Wood Demon. She raised her wings and flew in mournful circles above the place. "*Ah mio alma perdida!*" she called, but all was silence. Klaniving had vanished.

We must now go back to the Prince of the Diamond Isles, whom we left running in the forest. He went on for some time, but, after a little, he noticed that the bird he was pursuing had vanished. He looked all around, up and down, and through the trees, but it was nowhere in sight.

Then he thought of Marietta and decided to find her, but that was easier said than done. However, he started bravely to retrace his steps, for he



thought that a noble knight would hardly leave his chosen lady in distress, and somehow it seemed to him that some harm had befallen his little companion of the afternoon. But now he felt very tired; the brambles caught and tore at his fine doublet and hose, as if to hold him back against his will. He called Marietta loudly, but there was no reply. Presently he spied something gleaming in the bushes to one side. It was a tiny silver shoe which he knew to be hers. He picked it up and went stoutly on, but he saw that the rose that she had given him was withered.

Now he was coming to an open space, and he heard a gentle cry, "*Ah mio alma perdida!*" It came from a bird overhead, and the bird was acting very strangely. It seemed to want him to follow, and came so near that the Prince could have sworn that he saw tears in its eyes. As it flew in the same direction that he had come, and seemed to be leading towards the village, the Prince allowed himself to be guided by its flight.

It went steadily forward, and by and by the trees began to grow less thickly together, and the Prince found that he could see stars in the heavens overhead. His heart was heavy, but he hoped that Marietta would be waiting for him on the outskirts of the wood, and he pressed on. Now the white moonlight shone through the open, and made the



place almost as bright as day. A step more, and he had reached the clearing.

The bird that had brought him so well and safely was flying above his head as if in farewell. The Prince looked up, and something told him that in that form he saw his lost companion.

“Marietta!” he called, “Marietta!” but she only gave him one sorrowful look and vanished again into the forest.

The Prince was alone, and sadly, with bent head and lagging feet, he went back to the village that lay before him, his faithful charger following behind. When he reached the place he found the people in the wildest excitement, and in their midst stood the Mayor in chains, for he was responsible for the life of the Prince, and the angry followers of the Heir of the Diamond Isles were about to make him pay the forfeit.

The poor Mayor caught sight of His Highness first, and flinging himself at the Prince’s feet, besought pardon for something of which he was quite innocent, which, with royal clemency, was bestowed upon him at once. Then the Prince called for silence, in a loud voice, and all the people listened. And then he told them what had befallen himself and his little companion.

“And know,” he continued, amidst the sighs and weeping of the people, “that to-night I pledge



myself, by all the vows of knighthood, and by my good halidom, to rescue from her grievous state the Lady Marietta, whom I declare to be, from this moment, my own liege lady, and whose colors I now do wear," and he tapped the little silver shoe with its blue lacing.

At this all the people cheered, and the Mayor loudest of all, but only the courtiers and soldiers of the Prince's guard were silent, for they knew if anything happened to the Heir that they would pay the penalty with their lives; but though they did not cheer, they dared not object, for the Prince was the son of an Absolute Ruler, and there was a law which said that any one contradicting a member of the Royal Family was in danger of losing his head for not more than ten years or less than three. And this they knew to be very embarrassing and uncomfortable, so they said nothing.

And now the Prince retired to think over the manner of the rescue, and when morning had dawned he had decided, after much thought, to consult the Oldest Citizen. Accordingly, while yet the streets were quiet and few of the villagers astir, he knocked at the door of the house and demanded admittance.

Now the Oldest Citizen could never bear to be disturbed of his morning's nap, and yet he did not quite like to refuse the Prince; so he told his



housekeeper to tell his Royal Highness that a certain old woman who lived on the borders of the town would meet the case exactly, and tell him just what to do. Now, hearing this, the Prince was very glad, and, with his hands in his pockets and whistling a merry tune, he went straight for the old woman's cottage. Now the old woman was very near-sighted and exceedingly deaf, so when she saw the Prince coming, she thought it was the boy who came to milk her cow, and, as was her custom, she handed him out a pail.

The Prince thought that this was rather a queer thing to give him, but he was aware that very wise people seldom wasted words, and he supposed the old woman knew what she was about. He took it, therefore, but he could not help asking her if she considered a milk-pail just the thing to meet the case. The old woman stared and mumbled something, for she had lost most of her teeth, and it suddenly struck the Prince that perhaps she might be angry with him for his question, and be muttering an incantation, and not wishing to be changed, perhaps into a wolf or a serpent, he took to his heels as fast as he could, paying no attention to her cries, and only running more quickly, while she shook her crutch at him, and called him to come back.



On he went, and by and by he passed the little hut which was the dwelling of Marietta's mother. He did not know this, of course, but seeing a woman weeping, his kind heart was filled with pity, and he could not help stopping to ask her the reason of her distress.

The poor woman only cried more than ever at first, but by degrees she told him all her sorrow, her fears for Marietta, and the story of the power of Klaniving, the Wood Demon.

The Prince listened attentively, but he did not tell her his errand for fear that he might raise hopes that he could not fulfil. Still he felt so brave and strong that he bade her be of good cheer, and told her to be waiting at the threshold of the cottage door at nightfall, and "perhaps, who knows?" said the Prince, "you may yet have news of Marietta."

This comforted the poor woman a little in spite of herself, and the Prince went on his way, feeling somehow happier than before.

Reaching the forest, he sat down to think. Now he knew that there was great danger of his being changed, like Marietta, into a bird, and that he naturally wished to avoid; and now he remembered, for the first time, that the old woman had given him no directions for the use of the pail which he still carried. He thought and thought,



and all at once he jumped up and gave a long and joyful whistle of delight. At that moment the scarlet plumage of the ill-omened bird of yesterday flashed through the leaves of the wood, and, taking his pail in one hand and carrying Marietta's tiny shoe in the other, the Prince followed.

Deeper and deeper they went into the forest, the Prince keeping close watch on the flight of the evil bird, and feeling as brave as ever did knight before; and after many weary turns and twistings, which the Prince was careful to note, he came all at once into an open space. And now the same thing happened that had befallen Marietta, for suddenly throwing aside his disguise, stood Klaniving, the Wood Demon. For an instant the Prince remained motionless, and Klaniving chuckled with fiendish glee. Taking a handful of powder from a pouch which he wore at his side, he tried to throw it in the Prince's face, but the Prince was too quick for him. Leaping to one side, he suddenly thrust the milk-pail over Klaniving's head, entirely covering him, and then he sat down upon it and waited, somewhat out of breath, for the next move.

And now Klaniving struggled and kicked in his tin prison, and writhed and wiggled; but it was no use; the Prince sat still, and the milk-pail did not move. And then Klaniving was furious. He



raved and muttered and cried and yelled, but still the Prince sat and did not say a word. Then Klaniving grew frightened, and begged and pleaded to be let out. He was stifling, he said. He wouldn't, he mustn't, he shouldn't stay there another minute. He would give the Prince everything his heart could desire — gold and rubies, and diamonds as big as hens' eggs. But the Prince said nothing, and only drummed with his heels on the side of the pail. Then screamed Klaniving in a rage, —

“I know what you have come for. But I won't do it! I won't! I won't! I won't! Marietta shall stay a bird all the days of her life! So there! Oh! oh!” for the Prince was beating a regular tattoo on the side of his prison.

“Very well,” said the Prince calmly, “that is just as you say, only, in that case, you remain here; and, furthermore, if I hear you scream in that disagreeable way again, I shall endeavor to turn you into a green horned toad.”

At this fearful threat, Klaniving trembled all over; for he was a great coward, and he did not know but what the Prince might be able to do what he said. So he began to beg for mercy; and at last he offered to release Marietta if only the Prince would let him go.

“Very well,” said the Prince, and Klaniving,



from under his pail, whistled in a peculiar manner. In an instant the place was alive with birds; but, alas! the Prince could not tell one from another.

"Which one will you have changed back again?" asked Klaniving, laughing to himself, for he knew very well of what the Prince was thinking.

And now the Prince did not know what to say, for all the birds looked exactly alike.

At last a bright thought struck him.

"I choose the one who has tears in her eyes," said the Prince, and in a moment Marietta stood before him. And oh, how glad they were to meet again!

"You will excuse my not rising," said the Prince, after the first greeting was over, "but the fact is, that I am sitting on this pail because Klaniving the Wood Demon is underneath."

"Oh!" said Marietta, and she gave a little hop, and then a very little scream; and then, suddenly, her eyes began to sparkle. "Make him release all these poor birds, too," she said; and the Prince nodded.

"Klaniving, you have almost won your liberty," he began; "now it only remains for you to gratify this lady's wish, which, of course, will be a great pleasure for you to do, and release also these poor children that you have wickedly lured away from home and changed to their present state."



And now, if rage could kill, the Prince's last hour would indeed have come ; but after storming for a while, so that Marietta turned white with terror and clung close to her companion, Klaniving finally muttered the words that would set the children at liberty.

And then what a change ! Brown-haired maids, and maids fair as a lily ; sturdy boys in homespun, and boys in silks and velvets ; and all clustering round the Prince and Marietta, and laughing and crying for joy by turns.

Then the Prince asked one of them to bring a large rock from a little distance, and this he put on the top of the pail ; and then, sliding quietly off, he seized Marietta by the hand, and, leading the long procession, they ran as fast as they could for home, reaching the outskirts of the forest where the Wood Demon's power ended, before Klaniving had been able to make his escape.

And the very first place they went to was the cottage of Marietta's mother ; and oh, what a joyful time they had ! And how Marietta kissed and clung to her mother ; and how Marietta's mother kissed and clung to her ; and what thick pieces of bread and honey they all ate, or bread and jam, if they preferred ; and what a commotion there was in the village, to be sure, when the whole party entered !



The Mayor made a long speech, though nobody but the Town Clerk listened; and the courtiers all felt of their heads, and were exceedingly glad to find them still firmly on their shoulders; the old woman had another milk-pail given her, only this one was filled with gold pieces; the schools all closed, and roasted peanuts could be had for the asking at all the street corners.

As for the Oldest Citizen, he was held in more respect than ever; and I really think that he must have known something after all, for when the Town Clerk asked him what would become of Marietta and the Prince, he took the public records and wrote with his own hand, at the end of the faithful relation of their adventures:—

“They lived happily forever after.”







THE QUEEN OF THE BLUE  
MOUNTAIN.

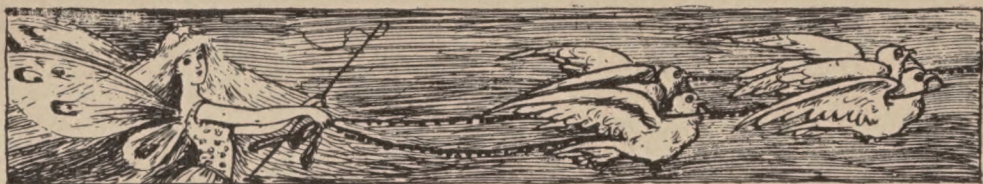














## THE QUEEN OF THE BLUE MOUNTAIN.

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THERE once lived a Queen who cared for nothing so much as forget-me-nots ; and because there had sprung from a seed which her fairy godmother had given her and which she had planted on the top of the mountain where her palace stood, such a quantity of these flowers that they had gradually covered the whole ground, she came to be called the Queen of the Blue Mountain.

Now the Queen loved her flowers as she loved nothing else, and for this there was a particular reason. It had been prophesied by an old Wizard of vast learning and great repute, that if a man should once climb the mountain, the forget-me-nots would wither as he passed, and that the Queen's heart would break, and she would fall into a sleep like death ; but while the flowers remained alive and fresh, no sorrow or harm could befall the Queen.

And it was said, moreover, that if a maiden



touched with but a single one of the beautiful flowers her lover's breast, that from that moment he would love her and think of her only.

But this seldom happened, for the Queen guarded her forget-me-nots jealously. A great wall ran all along the base of the mountain, and the only gate was defended by a terrible Monster, half man and half beast; and furthermore, there was issued a proclamation, that whoever should be found trying to pluck even one of these flowers should on that instant suffer death for so doing.

The Queen lived in a palace made all of silver, and it was built directly on top of the Blue Mountain. In it fountains splashed musically all day long, and sweetest melody filled the air. Two white pigeons brought the Queen food whenever she wanted it, and her attendants were all beautiful maidens, chosen from among the fairest of her land. But among all her court there was not a single man; even the pages who held up the Queen's train were pretty little girls, and when the Queen was obliged to confer with her councillors, she did so either by letter or else, on great occasions, leaving her walled enclosure, she went closely veiled to the city palace, and here listened to their reports and made known her royal wishes.

But though she went out so seldom, the fame of her beauty had spread abroad, and many were the



princes and noble knights that had been destroyed while trying vainly to scale the wall around the mountain, or to kill the tireless Monster who guarded the ponderous gate.

Now far away from the realm of the Queen of the Blue Mountain there dwelt a King who had twenty-one children, and these one day he called around him.

“You are all grown up,” he said, “and the time has come when I should resign the crown and divide the kingdom amongst you. With this end in view, I have had the number of the population taken, and I have found, to my sorrow, that when each of you has chosen his court, levied his army, and selected your different officers, astrologers, governors of provinces, and so on, none of you will have, properly speaking, any subjects at all. Now a kingdom without subjects is a kingdom not worth the having, and so I have gathered you here to-day in order to propose some plan of action. To begin with, I should suggest your tossing up a coin of the realm, and by this simple method determining who is to be my successor.” The King paused, and the brothers, who were delighted with this novel plan, acted upon it at once; and the lot was found to have fallen, very properly indeed, to the eldest.

“Very good,” said the King, “and now the rest



of you must arrange matters among yourselves. I think, for my part, that you had better remain at home, and take some lucrative position at the court under your brother ; but if any of you should wish to travel and seek his fortune, I will furnish him, at my own expense, with a horse, three gold pieces, and a complete suit of armor."

At this the brothers cheered loudly ; but all save the youngest decided to remain at home. He, however, stepped boldly forward, and, sinking on one knee before his father, said, —

"May it please your Majesty, I have decided to marry the Queen of the Blue Mountain."

At this all the brothers nudged one another and laughed, and the King himself put on a second pair of spectacles, and looked sternly at his audacious son. But the Prince held his ground stoutly and would not be dismayed.

"By the beard of my grandfather!" said the King, and that was an expression he only used when much excited. "Whence gets this stripling his assurance? Have you not heard," he continued, turning to his son, "what has been the fate of the noblest, ay, and the bravest of every land and clime, who have tried to win and wed this Queen?"

"Yes, sire," said the Prince, "but may it please your Majesty, they may not have loved her as I



do. At any rate, I am going to have a trial, and do my princely best."

"Oh, very well, very well," said the King, and he coughed very hard, and tried to think that was what caused the mistiness in his eyes. "Here are your three gold pieces, and your horse and armor you will find in the courtyard," and then he stood up, to signify that the interview was at an end.

So the Prince shook hands with all his brothers, and, tying his money up in a corner of his pocket-handkerchief, went out in the courtyard, where he found, as his father had promised, a complete suit of armor, and a noble steed as black as midnight. Mounting gayly, therefore, he rode away, and soon the arches and towers of the castle that had been his home were lost to sight. He journeyed blithely onward for many a league, stopping at nightfall to rest, and making his food of burds and berries, and sometimes of fruit, drinking at wells and wandering streams, and letting his good horse crop the grass whenever he listed. In this way they travelled through a great part of the country, until at last, very faintly in the distance, the Prince discerned something that his heart told him was the Blue Mountain which he sought, and which was to be the end of his journeying. Approaching nearer, he saw by the wayside a singular hut or cavern all of rock, before which hung a



swinging sign; and reining in his charger, the Prince read in large black letters: —

“THIS IS THE HOUSE OF THE PRINCIPAL ENCHANTER.  
ENCHANTING DONE HERE AT REDUCED RATES.  
WALK IN.”

“Now this is just what I am looking for,” said the Prince, and he dismounted, and tied his horse to a tree.

The cavern when he had entered was so dark that the Prince could with difficulty distinguish anything, but, after having stepped on the tail of a dragon that was dozing in a corner, and having very nearly tumbled over a seething caldron, and into a tub filled with the water of life, he finally saw, in the remotest corner of the place, a tiny jet of flame, over which an old man was stooping, and which shot forth forked tongues of fire, now green, now crimson, and now violet.

“May it please you,” said the Prince, taking off his cap, for he had very good manners, “how am I to reach the palace of the Queen of the Blue Mountain?”

“In order to reach the palace of the Queen of the Blue Mountain, you must first kill the Monster that guards her gate. Two gold pieces, please,” said the Enchanter in a monotonous tone.

The Prince hastily paid the required sum.



“And now, how am I to kill the Monster?” asked the Prince.

“That,” said the Principal Enchanter, “will be extra. Have you two more gold pieces?”

“Alas! no,” said the Prince.

“Then I can tell you nothing further,” said the Enchanter, and he went on with his work, which was to find why fire burnt, and why water ran down-hill.

At this the Prince was exceedingly angry, and he struck the floor of the cavern with the end of his sword.

“Tell me instantly,” he cried, “or by my knightly troth I will have your head!” But the Enchanter only pointed to a placard on the wall, where, by the fitful glare of the magician’s lamp, the Prince read:—

“ANY ONE CREATING A DISTURBANCE IN THIS PLACE  
SHALL BE IMMEDIATELY EATEN BY THE DRAGON.

PER ORDER OF THE PRINCIPAL ENCHANTER.”

“Very well,” said the Prince, “very well;” but there did not seem to be anything else to say, so he walked out again, and mounted his horse, for he reflected that if he were eaten by the dragon to-day, he could not possibly win or wed the Queen of the Blue Mountain to-morrow, and so he decided to postpone the battle until some more auspicious occasion.



However, two gold pieces were gone, and that made him feel very sad, and he rode along, with his heart filled with grief, and his head upon his breast.

So sorrowful indeed was he, that he did not notice at all where he was going, till suddenly his horse stopped of his own accord, and right in front of him he beheld a little old woman, bent and withered, who seemed to be in great pain.

At this the Prince at once leaped off his charger and bending over her he asked her what was the trouble.

"Fair son," said the old woman faintly, "I am spent with fatigue and the heat of the day, and I have come from a long distance. Do you put me on your horse and take me to mine own dwelling-place."

"Right gladly, good mother," said the Prince, and lifting her tenderly, he put her on his steed, and, taking the bridle, led him slowly and carefully along. "Whither shall we go, good mother?" he asked.

"Straight before you as the crow flies," answered the dame in a cracked voice, and in this fashion the odd pair went on their way.

Then, to beguile the journey, the Prince told the old woman of all that had happened to him, and of all that he hoped to do, and to this she listened



patiently, nodding her head and asking now and again some question.

At last they came in sight of a tiny house, almost covered with climbing roses, and here the old woman signified that she wished to stop.

“Thank you, and bless you, fair son,” said she, and her voice was now both low and musical, and so different from her former high-pitched tones, that the Prince looked up in surprise, and there, seated on his charger, was no old woman at all, but a beautiful fairy in gauze and gold, who smiled and nodded pleasantly at him, and laid a hand upon his arm as white as a snowflake and very nearly as small.

“I am Graciosa,” she said, still smiling, “and, by my faith, I like thee much. Prithee, help me to dismount, that I may show thee what the price of a fairy’s gratitude be like,” and, touching the Prince’s shoulder with the tips of her fingers, she swung herself lightly down from the saddle.

Now all this time the Prince was too amazed and enraptured to speak, but at last he found his tongue.

“Dear lady,” said he, “I am well repaid already for my small service. Let me but kiss thy hand, and I shall be forevermore thy debtor.”

Now Graciosa was a fairy, but she was not above liking a well-turned compliment as well as any-



body, so, though she tapped the Prince on the cheek with her wand, and called him a sad, sad flirt, and a gay deceiver, it is not unlikely that she was somewhat pleased after all.

“And now to business,” said Graciosa gayly. “I am two thousand years old, and therefore somewhat wiser than thyself, sweet knight.”

“I should not have thought it,” murmured the Prince, referring to the fairy’s antiquity.

“And I should advise thee,” continued the fairy, “to give up thy quest in regard to the Queen of the Blue Mountain; but, if thou dost insist” —

“Oh, I must insist,” interrupted the Prince.

“Then will I help thee as far as in me lies, but, unfortunately, that is not so very far. I can merely aid thee to kill the Monster that guards her palace, but further than that I am powerless to succor thee.”

“That is immaterial,” said the Prince politely. “If I can kill the Monster, I shall consider my labors as at an end.”

“On the contrary,” said the fairy, “they will have but just begun. However, if thou art decided, I will tell thee what thou must do. The Monster is invulnerable, that is, no weapon can pierce his scaly hide; if thou art resolved to conquer thou shouldst do it in this way,” and she stooped and whispered something in his ear.



“Oh, thank you,” said the Prince, “that is a very good way indeed. I shall try it immediately. In fact, this very night, and I think that you are very, very kind.”

“Well,” said the fairy, “I’m sure I wish thee good luck,” and, waving her hand in farewell, she disappeared within the rose-covered cottage, and the Prince rode onward to the city that lay before him.

Coming to the gate, he was admitted by the warden, and after asking his way to the nearest shop, he bought a large and very strong net and a ball of the stickiest kind of pitch. This took his last gold piece, but he did not regret it as he had done the other two, and, carefully carrying his purchases, he again left the city and approached the foot of the Blue Mountain.

The moon had just risen as he neared its base, and by its light the Prince saw the horrible Monster that guarded the place, marching in watchful strides up and down by the wall and gate, and uttering, from time to time, fearful cries, that made the Prince’s blood to freeze in his veins and his horse to tremble in every limb. However, the Prince was not daunted, but slipping quietly from the saddle, he took the ball of pitch in his hand and began to smear with it the inner lining of the net. All this time the Monster had been growing more and



more uneasy, and when the Prince had quite finished, and had stepped out from the shadow into the open moonlight, the creature gave a fearful roar, and rushed forward with uplifted club to kill him.

But the Prince held his ground, and just as the Monster approached and was aiming a fearful blow, he dexterously threw the net over the creature's head and the club descended with a harmless crash. Then there was a terrible struggle; the Monster bit and fought and kicked, but all in vain; for the more he tried to get out, the faster the pitch stuck, and the more the meshes of the net wound him round. At last, however, he lost his footing and fell, and the Prince saw the Monster lying quite still and dead with his neck broken.

Then the Prince, with his heart beating high with hope, entered the palace gate, and as he walked up the path, the forget-me-nots on every side lay withered and dead behind him.

Finally he reached the silver portico of the palace, and there, surrounded by her weeping maids, he beheld the Queen of the Blue Mountain standing, wringing her hands, while her beautiful hair fell in heavy ebon masses like a veil about her white shoulders. At this the Prince was filled with sorrow, and ran forward to assure her of his love and homage; but as he approached she grew pale and would have fallen had he not caught her in



his arms. Her beautiful head lay on his shoulder, and she just looked up at him once and smiled.

"You are dearer to me than my forget-me-nots," she said, and then her eyes closed and her form relaxed.

"You have killed her! you have killed her!" cried all the maids of honor, and they raised their voices and wept.

But the Prince was silent. He remained motionless and overcome with grief for a long time, and then he raised his head.

"Take me to the throne-room of state," he said; and, bearing still the lifeless figure of the Queen, he followed whither they led him, and, coming to the spot, he placed her upon the ivory throne and putting the crown upon her head, he turned to the astonished damsels.

"I leave you," he said, "for the present, to watch and wait beside your Queen, who now lieth under a grievous spell. Remain faithful; I shall return and undo the mischief that my reckless haste hath unwittingly wrought. Surely, if so deep a love as mine can cause so great a woe, it shall yet lead to our further joy and to the restoring of this, my liege lady, to life and liberty. But, so that I come not in a year and a day, believe then all hope to be at an end. Meanwhile, I charge you, watch and wait," and turning, the



Prince strode from among them and out and away.

But when he came to the place where he had left his horse, he found that, terrified by the battle with the Monster, his charger had broken loose, and in the distance the Prince could just hear the sound made by his steed's retreating hoofs. However, the Prince was already so sad that this did not seem to matter much; and though it was on foot that he had to journey, he walked to such good purpose that before sunrise he had traversed the weary leagues that lay between him and the rose-covered cottage of the fairy Graciosa whither he was bound, and the earliest gleam of dawn was just breaking, when, stained with dust and travel, he knocked loudly at her door.

It opened at once to the summons and there stood the fairy, smiling graciously upon him, and bidding him enter and be of good cheer.

"I know all that has happened," said she, "but keep up thy courage, and I will relate to thee what thou must do."

First, however, she made him partake of the fare that her house afforded, and when he was somewhat refreshed she proceeded:—

"It now depends altogether on the stoutness of thine heart, fair Prince, if, mayhap, the Queen be restored to life and the evil spell be broken. And



first, why went ye not to the cavern of the Principal Enchanter for counsel in this matter?"

"Nothing," said the Prince with feeling, "would ever make me consent to visit that place again."

At this the fairy smiled somewhat, but soon becoming grave again, she went on and related to attentive ears what the Prince was to do to save the Queen.

She told him that growing in the garden of the fairy godmother of the Queen there were a few sprays of the magic forget-me-not, like to those which had formerly bloomed near the royal palace, and that they were the only forget-me-nots of the kind in the whole world.

One of these flowers laid on the lips and on the heart of the Queen would immediately restore her to life, but the one who plucked these magic blossoms must first have passed successfully the three tests of patience, bravery, and love. "For," said Graciosa to the Prince, "such a one, unless he were proven gentle, courageous, and faithful, would wither, by his slightest touch, the flower, and the last hope of the Queen's release from a living death would have vanished, never to return. And now," she continued, "it remains for thee to tell me whether thou dost wish to pass these three trials, for they are hard to bear, and many the noble knights, ay, and the sons of kings, who have fal-



tered and fallen by the wayside. Think well upon thy answer, for thy choice imports thee much."

"Surely," said the Prince, his face in a fine glow of generous resolve, "surely I were thrice a coward could I give aught but one reply to such a question," and, sinking on one knee before the fairy, he continued, "O kind and gentle Graciosa, take pity on my distress and show me how I may restore my Queen to life."

And now the fairy smiled right joyfully upon him.

"What help I may bestow is thine," she said, "though I fear me I may not aid thee much. But trust in thy cause, and make thy good sword thy friend, and all will yet be well."

Going to the casement she blew a shrill blast by means of the silver whistle that hung by her side.

"That is to summon my chariot," said she, "and in it I will conduct thee to the dwelling-place of the Queen's godmother. She is a very powerful, and I am afraid a rather disagreeable old fairy, and they tell me she is difficult to get along with; but she loves the Queen, and if thou dost please her, and art proven faithful, she will doubtless assist thee in thy need and bestow the magic flower upon thee; and now let us come."



So saying, she stepped across the threshold, and the Prince, following, beheld the most beautiful chariot he had ever seen. It was shaped like a shell and was made all of ivory inlaid with gold and mother-of-pearl; the cushions and linings were of rose-colored silk, and it was drawn by ten milk-white doves harnessed with silken cord strung with little bells that tinkled musically at every motion.

Stepping lightly in, Graciosa bade the Prince follow, and when they were seated, the doves, spreading their wings, carried them upward so very, very far, that the green earth beneath them seemed miles away, and the tallest tree-top looked no bigger than a toadstool, while the palace of the Queen of the Blue Mountain showed no larger than a peasant's hut, so great was the distance.

Faster and faster they went, and the Prince, looking down, beheld a vast expanse of water, green flecked with white, that rose and fell in ceaseless, tireless motion.

"Are we almost there?" asked the Prince, but Graciosa silently shook her head.

On and on they went, and soon the swaying of the chariot began to make the Prince feel very sleepy. He tried his best to keep his eyes open, for he felt that it would be very impolite to doze in the presence of a lady, but it was no use. Do what he



would, his head would nod, and his eyes would shut almost in spite of himself; and at last thought the Prince, "I won't go to sleep, but I'll just close my eyes for a moment."

But before he knew it he was wrapped in slumber; and indeed it was many hours later when Graciosa, lightly tapping him on the arm with her wand, awoke him, and, pointing to a tiny speck in the distance, now rapidly growing larger, told the bewildered and only half-conscious Prince that he now beheld the home of the fairy godmother of the Queen of the Blue Mountain.

Suddenly the chariot began to swing lower, and before long it stopped altogether, and the Prince found himself on solid earth again, and with Graciosa he began to walk up the narrow path that led to a dainty cottage, over whose latticed windows vines were climbing. A tiny wreath of smoke curled slowly upward from the little chimney, and a twittering group of sparrows chirped and gossiped under the eaves of the thatched roof, and indeed it all looked so comfortable that the spirits of the Prince began to rise, and his heart to feel as light as a thistledown.

"Courage!" said Graciosa, and she rapped softly with the bright polished knocker. At this, there was heard from within a noise as of the clatter of high-heeled shoes on a wooden floor, and



in a moment the door was swung open, and on the threshold the Prince beheld the funniest little old woman he had ever seen in his life. To begin with, she was very, very small, and she wore a white frilled cap as big as a cabbage, from beneath which gleamed a pair of black eyes as sharp as a gimlet, and a good deal more penetrating. She wore a short quilted petticoat of light blue satin, and a white scarf folded cornerwise, like a handkerchief, was neatly pinned across her shoulders. In one hand she carried an ebony crutch that shone like glass with polishing, and on her feet were the little red shoes that the Prince had heard; and now he noticed that they had very high heels indeed, and were ornamented with very large diamond buckles.

“Hoity-toity!” said the fairy godmother to Graciosa, and looking not too well pleased, “whom have we here?”

“This, dear sister, is a suitor for the hand of your god-daughter, the Queen of the Blue Mountain,” said Graciosa, smiling.

“Fiddlesticks!” said the fairy godmother, and she glared harder than ever at the Prince.

“Oh, but that is a fact,” said Graciosa kindly, “for you must know that he has vanquished the Monster that guarded the Queen’s gate, and that he is now come to go through the three tests pre-



scribed by yourself for any one aspiring to your godchild's hand; and it is with the hope of rescuing the Queen from her present evil plight that he ventures to come to you."

"Better far that she should remain as she is, than that she should wed a trumpery Prince," snapped the fairy godmother, but she could not well refuse to allow the Prince a trial, at all events, and so she asked him grudgingly to come in, and asked Graciosa also, a little less crossly, if she would not enter likewise, and partake of some refreshment after her journey. But at this the fairy begged to be excused; she had urgent business, she said, with the King of the Polar Regions, and she could not linger any longer; so, casting an encouraging glance at the Prince, and dropping a courtesy to the fairy godmother, she bade them both farewell, and entering her chariot, was soon lost to sight. And now the Prince was alone with the godmother of his best beloved, but try as he might, he could think of nothing whatsoever to say. And all this time the fairy godmother was boring him through and through with her gimlet-like eyes.

"Well," said she, "how much longer are you going to keep me standing here?" but as the Prince, much abashed, went to step over the threshold, she pulled him sharply back. "He



wants to marry my god-daughter, and he doesn't know enough to wipe his feet on the door-mat!" she said, speaking perhaps to the empty air, or perhaps to a large green parrot that peered down at the strange pair through the bars of a silver cage that swung from a beam overhead.

And now the first trial of the Prince began in good earnest, for from early in the morning till late at night, the tongue of the fairy godmother was never idle, and, try as he might, everything the Prince did was clumsy, awkward, and worth nothing. His tasks were so many, and, to his unaccustomed hands, so difficult, that he felt sometimes that if he were not careful, he should pick the whole cottage up in one hand and cast it into the sea; but he kept the face of his lady-love before him at his work, and for her sake refrained from even a single reproach, or impatient word, or look, or gesture.

All this continued for many days, till at last, one morning when he had come down as usual, he found the fairy godmother waiting for him, and it seemed somehow to the Prince as though she regarded him with a little more favor than she had ever done before.

Not that her voice was less sharp, or her tongue more silent, but rather, that her eyes were gentler; and once, when she thought he was not looking,



the Prince fancied that he even saw her smile. But when evening came she called him.

"Prince," said she, "your first trial is ended. It remains for you to prove whether you are as brave as you are gentle ; for though you be patient enough, I love not cowards."

At this the Prince flushed hotly, and clapped his hand to his sword.

"Show me but what I am to do," he said.

"Come then with me," answered the fairy godmother dryly, and went out of the cottage, the Prince following. It was bright starlight outside, and the parrot in the silver cage looked like nothing so much as a ball of ruffled feathers. On they went, never speaking a word, till they came to a hill that the Prince never remembered to have seen before. Here the fairy godmother stopped, and, tapping three times upon its grassy side, the Prince saw a door slowly open, revealing a long corridor of black marble, hung with thousands of little lamps that twinkled and flashed like so many fire-flies. At the further end of the palace was a massive gate of wrought iron, thickly studded with brazen spikes. "Here," said the fairy godmother, "I must leave you. Within is the Hall of Myths. There must you spend to-night in vigil. Knock boldly, and enter."

So saying, she vanished, and the Prince



found himself quite alone. There was the most profound silence, and the heart of the Prince seemed to leap within him. But he thought of her whom he loved, and knocked boldly upon the massive portal with the hilt of his trusty sword.

It swung slowly back at the summons, upon its hinges, and the Prince entered.

All was darkness, and at first he could perceive nothing, till at length advancing, he found himself encompassed by a shadowy circle of white shapes, who slowly revolved about him, and who, to an accompaniment of clanking chains, slowly chanted a weird and plaintive ditty, broken only by an occasional wail of sorrow.

The Prince listened attentively to all this, but somehow he did not feel at all frightened, but only a little bored.

“It is really very monotonous,” he said to himself; and finally he broke the silence, and asked one of the shapes if it would not be so kind as to talk to him, and relieve somewhat the dull hours which must still elapse ere morning.

But at the sound of a human voice there was the wildest commotion; the shapes melted away and vanished in opposite directions. There was a subdued murmur, the gleam of white drapery hidden in a moment by the darkness, and then, in



a moment, silence ; and the Prince found himself once more alone.

All at once, however, a tremor overspread his body, and his heart beat thick and fast ; for there, in one corner, the Prince beheld two fiery eyes that gleamed like sparks, and that seemed ever and anon to come nearer.

Soon, indeed, there sounded on the marble pavement the patter of four tiny feet, and the Prince shook as with an ague, for he knew at last, and the thought paralyzed him with terror, that the creature that was approaching him was a mouse.

Now a mouse was the one thing of all others that the Prince feared, and it is safe to say that he would much rather have faced a man-eating tiger or the fiercest kind of a dragon than this harmless little animal. Horror kept him motionless, and soon the mouse came nearer. It made little playful dashes at him from across the hall, and the hair of the Prince rose up on end, and his tongue clove to the roof of his mouth.

“Oh, for a chair !” thought the Prince, and he tried to make himself as small as possible, till all at once the face of the Queen of the Blue Mountain floated before him, and, with a wild cry, he sprang forward, sword in hand, upon the enemy. The next moment, and mouse, shapes, hall, had vanished, and he found himself on the green hill-



side, with the fairy godmother beside him, and the golden sun rising in the distance from behind the purple mountains. The Prince was very pale, and he still clutched his sword; but the relief was so great that had the fairy godmother looked one fraction of an inch less forbidding, he would have kissed her on the spot. Perhaps she knew this, for at any rate she smiled; but, growing grave again, she took him by the hand, and led him in the direction of a pond that, calm and placid and encircled with violets, lay, a woodland mirror, at his feet.

“Fair Prince,” she said, and her voice was as sweet as a mother’s talking to her child, “you have stood two tests bravely. Now comes the third, which is far more difficult than aught you have yet been through. Stoop down;” and, as he did so, she made some passes with her fingers over the Prince’s eyes, and murmured some words to herself in a low voice.

“Now look,” said she, and the Prince, following her motioning finger, gazed fixedly into the unrippled surface of the water. At first he saw nothing but blue sky and the branches of trees; but after a little a something appeared, which, growing more and more distinct, showed the Prince the throne-room of the silver palace of the Queen of the Blue Mountain.



And now the Prince grew hot and cold by turns, for, seated on the throne, he beheld the lady of his choice, her dark hair falling like a veil about her, the crown of diamonds upon her head, and her beautiful eyes closed as if in slumber. Around her, in various positions, were her maids of honor; and now the Prince noticed that they began to point in wonder towards the door, and talk among themselves. Suddenly the heavy curtain that screened the entrance to the audience chamber was thrust aside, and the Prince started; for there, with his back towards him, stood a tall, richly attired youth; and now the Prince grew faint, for in the stranger's hand he beheld the magic flower. Nearer and nearer came the youth to the throne where the Queen reposed, till at last he reached its foot. Stooping over, he was about to touch the lips and heart of the Queen with the life-begetting plant, when the Prince, who was no longer master of himself, called out in anguish for him to desist. As if hearing the voice of command, the youth hesitated; and on the instant a voice, sweeter than the music of an æolian harp, came floating as from a great distance to the Prince.

“O son,” it said, “is this then thy love? Because a stranger bringeth life to thy Queen, dost thou then condemn her to endless sleep? If thine own power to aid be vanished, dost refuse that



which comes from another? Is it to be health and happiness for thy Queen, though it be health and happiness through and with another, or dost thou will her whom thou lovest to lie in soulless slumber forever? ”

The voice died away, and the Prince gazed yet upon the vision. It grew clearer and clearer, and never had the Queen looked so beautiful.

Suddenly, with a loud cry, he flung his hands above his head.

“Farewell, farewell,” he called in broken accents to the sleeping Queen, “and awake to joy and life !”

With breaking heart he turned away ; but the fairy godmother motioned silently again towards the pool. The Prince turned for one last look, and lo ! his Queen had opened her eyes ; she was smiling, smiling at him ; and in the face of the stranger youth by her side the Prince discerned his own features.

“O faithful Prince !” a voice beside him was saying, and there stood the fairy godmother fairly beaming with smiles.

“Come,” she said, “the third trial is over, and it is with joy and not with mourning that I bestow upon thee the hand of my well-beloved god-daughter ;” and leading him to a little nook closely hidden from prying eyes, she showed him the blue



forget-me-nots waving gently in the summer wind, and seeming to beckon him to approach nearer.

“Pluck them fearlessly,” said the fairy god-mother, “for your hands are clean and your heart is pure.” And as the Prince stooped to gather the lovely flower, she whispered, —

“You have but to wish, to find yourself once again with the lady of your choice.”

The Prince kissed her hand gratefully, and in another moment he found himself, the saving bloom in his hand, and his feet on the threshold of the throne-room of state.

Sitting calmly, with a smile on her lips as he had left her, was the Queen of the Blue Mountain, and the Prince advancing laid the flower upon her lips and heart.

A beautiful flush, as of the morning, stole into her cheeks, and her eyes slowly opened and rested full upon the Prince; and smiling a little the rosy flush deepened, and softly to him she spoke in this wise: “O Prince, I have slumbered long and deeply, but only have I dreamed of thee.”

And, taking her by the hand, the Prince led her forth, and as they passed adown the garden-walk, lo! the forget-me-nots about them were blooming.















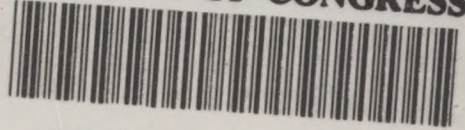








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